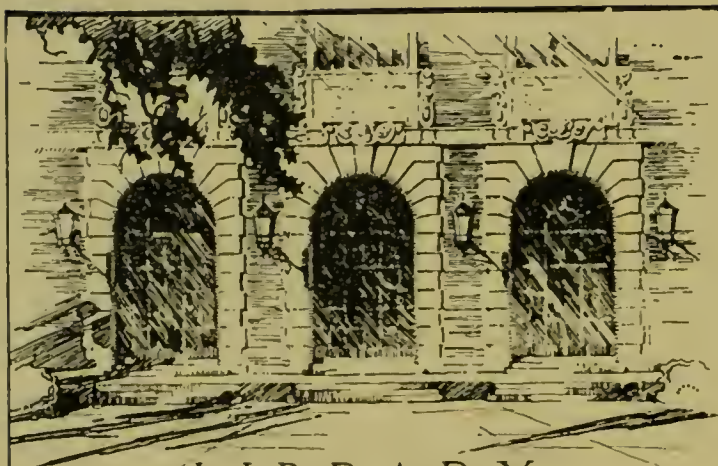


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THE EARL'S CEDARS.



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THE EARL'S CEDARS.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

“SMUGGLERS AND FORESTERS,” “FABIAN’S TOWER,” “LEWELL
PASTURES,” AND “THE WRECKERS.”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE EARL'S CEDARS.

CHAPTER I.

My father's house was a story higher than any other in the wild west-country village of Moraston. When we were boys, my brothers and I were rather proud of the high, straight, unpicturesque edifice in which we all three first saw the light. Though we clambered up a ladder-like staircase, and crept into slant-roofed chambers, somewhat resembling the holes of a dove-cot, we would not, in our early days, have given up the dignity accruing to us from those dingy, inconvenient, ill-lighted garrets.

The only advantage I can see in them now is, that those dormer-windows command a fine stretch of country. When the wind rises, and whistles through the lofty cedars, on the opposite side of the road which passes

my door, I sometimes quit my employment—though my life is a busy one—and go to the top of the old house to see the ocean waves break against the gigantic barrier of shingle which guards the coast. There go the ships, their topsails lowered, seeking the shelter of the neighbouring roads, which are full of storm-bound vessels; and, with a hoarse roar, like wild beasts disappointed of their prey, the long line of snow-white breakers leaps in fury against the great pebble-bar.

These vast accumulations of sand and shingle offer a triumphant opposition to the perpetual war carried on against them by the rough sea which lashes our low shore. The angry waves, like rash antagonists who go to war without counting the cost, or calculating the resources of the enemy, strengthen, by their violent attacks, the mighty bulwark Nature has raised to stop them. As they sweep onward, higher and higher, thundering and foaming, till they nearly reach the summit of the sloping wall, each monstrous avalanche bears its tribute of stones and seaweed gathered from the deep to swell the shifting mountain. After a storm, the beach is strewn with these trophies;—driftwood from wrecks in distant seas; jewels even, which the remorseless waves have swept from the persons of the drowned—all manner of curious relics

minge with the polished pebbles; and the next time the billows lash themselves into fury, they break upon a higher ridge of shingle than before.

Like the beach, our wild hills are tossed up and down over the face of the country, in every kind of fanciful shape. Above the village, the downs rise bare and brown, without a sign of vegetation except the short turf, which is soon parched by the sun. In spring and early summer the hills are green; but in general it is a bleak and gloomy district, with the storm-swept bars and mountains of sand and shingle on one side, and, on every other, the bold curves and abrupt summits of the wild western downs.

There were a few trees in the hollow, clustered among the cottages and out-buildings, as if for protection. Our house had a garden in front and at the back; and across the road were deep groves of evergreen. It is the only village in the west where I have ever heard the nightingale; but at intervals, in the night, and among the trees of Lord St. Lo's park, or over the pools of water which lay deep and still in their shadow, the thrilling song came to our ears. Thus heard, once in a way—for the villagers entertained an idea that the nightingales came every seven years to the place, and I have certainly not heard them

oftener—that tender melody sounded like the voice of a spirit.

A lonely-looking road wound under the park-wall, and up among the hills, past our door. It crossed the highway through the village at a couple of hundred yards' distance from the bottom of our garden. From the garret windows, it could be traced over the barren summits, and in and out through vast tracts of gorse and heather, which, when they were in blossom, gave quite a different appearance to the country. As soon as the bloom faded, or the furze was cut for fuel, the brown and withered stumps only added to the surrounding desolation.

Besides the superior elevation of the attic story, we were distinguished above our neighbours by keeping two maid-servants and several horses. My father's large round of practice as a medical man rendered this last expense necessary. At all hours of the day and night the surgery-bell was constantly ringing; and the poor animals in his service were worked hard to satisfy the wants of the rural population among whom he resided.

I am not sure that I did justice, formerly, to my father's unwearied exertions. At that time, the life of a village-doctor inspired me with disgust. I could not comprehend the quiet pleasure he derived from his profession,

to which, with the whole and undivided powers of a strong mind, he had been, since my mother's death, devoted.

One of his numerous crotchets was that medical men, as well as clergymen, should live alone, with no family troubles to disturb them. He was not a tender parent, but I believe him to have been a most conscientious one. I used to think that he looked with more affection upon his physic bottles and surgical instruments—above all, at his small medical library—than upon us, his children. His tone of voice was infinitely more gentle towards his patients; but then they were in pain or trouble; and though he bore a rough exterior, I learned to know at last that his heart was tender and in the right place towards the sick and needy.

The Countess St. Lo's illness formed an era at Moraston. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the great event of my childhood, when my father was sitting with us, one evening, tired and harassed, with his leather-overalls unbuttoned and his teacup in his hand, and the surgery-bell rang one of its sharpest peals. This was in my mother's lifetime. Her pale face grew contracted with anxiety.

"Cannot Edward go instead of you, this time, Robert?" she asked. "The boy is quick and clever, and knows more than you give

him credit for. You will wear yourself out with toil."

Before my father could answer her, our rough west-country maid, Dinah, rushed in. As she told her story, all traces of fatigue vanished from his countenance. He drank off, more to please my mother than himself, the cup of tea he had been holding in his hand; and, without stopping to fasten his leggings, mounted the horse which a servant from the Great House held in readiness for him, and rode through a storm of wind and rain to visit his new patient. My mother was an invalid, and kept early hours; but she sat up for him that night, listening to the wild gusts that swept through the elm-trees, and over the pine-tops, and wondering at his prolonged absence.

It was the first time that I had heard of "The Cedars"—as Lord St. Lo's place was called—being inhabited. The white house among the trees, where the nightingales paid unfrequent visits, was no longer empty. The Earl had come down without warning, and brought his fair young wife to die among his neglected tenantry.

Though my father visited her every day, I never entered the Great House during the Countess's stay there. My brothers and I, in general, roamed about the place freely; but,

in cases of sickness, my father was very particular, and when we accompanied him to take care of the horse, we were strictly charged to give no trouble, and accept no invitations to enter the dwellings he visited.

Frequently, during the poor lady's illness, I waited for hours under the impervious canopy of the gloomy group of cedars near the house, while he visited his patient. The horse would draw a little to one side to crop the grass; no one heeded us. I had time to count the rings on the bark of the old trees, which showed how many years they had withstood the fierce storms which swept over our wild hills, and to number the closed windows of the great pile of building, of which only a few chambers at the back were occupied by the sick lady, her infant daughter, and a few attendants.

Sometimes the nurses would bring the pretty little girl out to walk in the avenue. Once, when it rained heavily, I was invited to enter; but my father's orders were peremptory, and I did not venture to disobey them. Thus waiting for hours, it might be—bitter thoughts filled my heart. What were these great ones of the earth who dwelt in palaces, with the mighty cedar-boughs shutting them in from the world—those magnificent trees which the Hebrew king thought worthy to be employed in building the Temple of the Most

High? I doubted much whether the group on Lebanon were finer than our own! The country-people called the great space across which the straight dark branches stretched, in the middle of the park, opposite to the windows of the mansion, "the Earl's Drawing-room." There was not an inhabitant of Moraston who did not feel proud of The Cedars.

But there were times when these Oriental-looking trees were inexpressibly gloomy. I thought often of the sepulchres and burial-grounds I had read of, in the East, with their groves of funereal cypress, while I waited in the shortening days of autumn for my father. When the woods were robed in gold and crimson—when even the hedge-briers showed a rich variety of changing foliage, and put forth their bright berries—there were still the monotonous cedar-trees; darkly green, it is true, with no saddening trace of decay; freshly vigorous as if, instead of centuries having witnessed their slow growth, they were still young; but always the same, gaining no additional beauty, when their brethren of the forest were each clothed in brilliant though fading hues of gorgeous colouring.

My father hardly thought it worth while to tell me whether the Countess were better or worse, when he joined me. There could be no change of consequence in her hopeless

condition. I did not ask him ; neither did he question me respecting the thoughts which had occupied my tedious leisure. Absorbed in the details of this, to him, interesting case, he probably did not notice the flight of time, and imagined he had not left me for more than half an hour. He was generally grave after these visits, which were much longer than he paid elsewhere. Now and then, he had a quiet smile on his lips when he came forth. I believe the poor lady valued his society very much, and that they often held long and interesting conversations together. Of these he told me nothing ; but I have heard him, on his return, amuse my mother, whose health was sinking fast, with anecdotes belonging to a widely-different sphere from the quiet one we moved in at Moraston.

Though they did not meet, my mother and Lady St. Lo took a great interest in each other. They both knew that they must leave the world soon ; and, though nothing could be more dissimilar than their position, the twilight of that dim border-land in which they were both walking, gave an unsubstantiality to every surrounding circumstance that severed the lady of rank from the wife of the village-doctor. My mother always questioned her husband closely respecting every particular of the Countess's illness ; and I noticed

that my father of late never gainsayed nor neglected to answer her.

The final summons came to them, as my mother had often prophesied, nearly at the same moment. I remember that my father gave up almost all his other practice at the last to attend to these two cases. He passed his time between our own house and the Hall; and, very often, while I waited for him, I was expecting that the angel of death, whose pinions were quivering over the Great House, might in our absence have flapped his wing at the closed window of my poor mother's room.

The little girl passed me once, when I had thrown myself under the bank in a paroxysm of grief. She also was weeping. The grave-looking servant, who held her hand, tried to comfort her. Though I was but a boy, I did not choose that the woman and the child should see me in tears; but my mother was very justly dear to me, and I could not in a moment stop them. I went and leaned my head against the old horse's neck, pretending to be busy with the harness, when a little hand slid gently into mine,—a bright, though weeping, childish face looked up at me. The nurse called her hurriedly away, but not before I had involuntarily bent down and kissed the Earl's little daughter. The next morning the child and I were both motherless.

The Countess was buried on the same day with her neighbour in the village. If they died near the same time, she had wished it to be so. Her funeral was a private one, and every mark of respect was paid by the Earl to our bereaved family. He was for ever after in the habit of saying, that if anything could have saved Lady St. Lo, it would have been Mr. Frankland's unremitting and most skilful care. His lordship, who was a genuine Irishman in disposition, felt the loss he had sustained, for the time, severely, and rewarded generously all who had contributed towards smoothing for his young wife the painful passage to the tomb.

My brothers and I profited largely by these benevolent dispositions in our favour. I thought better of the aristocracy than I had done, while waiting in the rain under the cedars, when the Earl gave my brothers and myself full and free permission to shoot over his property, and fish in the stream which gushed through his beautiful park. My patient waiting had not escaped his notice, and he made me a present of a first-rate gun. All the keepers and gardeners were charged to be invariably civil; our table was to be supplied with fruit and game; and our estimation in the eyes of our neighbours in the village rose immeasurably higher.

I think my father was gratified by the Earl's attentions. He took them, very properly, as a mark of approbation of his professional skill; and the knowledge that he had done his utmost under trial, was the greatest comfort he was at that time capable of experiencing. His grief for my gentle mother sank very deep into his heart. I am not aware exactly how long the Earl's regret for his wife lasted; all I can positively say is, that, like most sorrows, it came to an end. In less than two years he had married again, and the frequent demands upon his property, the raised rents of his tenantry, and the felling of timber, gave proof that he was leading a gayer life than ever.

My father, on the contrary, though he said very little about what he suffered, grew rapidly older. The softer traits of his manner disappeared. He ceased to take an interest in much that had served to amuse his intelligent, delicate companion, and became every day more wrapped up in the toilsome duties of his profession, from which she had possessed sufficient power occasionally to divert his attention.

I do not know whether the painful circumstances under which he had last visited The Cedars influenced the Earl, but he seldom came near the place. None of his family

liked to look upon the grave side of human affairs. They were a race not natural to England—Irish to the heart's core. Nowhere could a pleasanter man be found than the Earl. My brothers and I were delighted with him, during his brief and hurried visits, which were always marked by some especial sign of favour, which made our lives more agreeable afterwards. But these acts of kindness were things of the moment. He was a boy among us—foremost with his gun, unwearied in promoting our boyish amusement, thoughtless as a child, and at the root cold-hearted.

I almost learned to look upon myself as the proprietor of The Cedars in his absence. My brothers cared less for the freedom and solitude of the place; and being, the one older, the other more studious, than myself, found greater amusement in society or in books. As for me, I dreamed away every moment of leisure in the neighbouring park. No career was as yet marked out for me. Edward had been reconciled to following his father's profession, by having a liberal share in its profits assigned to him. Harry used to be my mother's darling. He was decidedly clever, and my father was making every effort to fit him for college, in the hope of his obtaining a fellowship. I am hardly

aware what opinion our parent at that time entertained of me. We were very little together, and my mind was full of vague projects for the future, wherewith that grave, painstaking man was not likely to sympathise. Nevertheless, I too, in my own way, was working hard.

It was certainly an evil pride which made me keep back from him the knowledge of one part of my studies, in which he would have been interested, and might have aided me; but he had chosen to consider me an idler, and I let the charge pass without contradicting it. Not a bird on the wing, not an insect on the grass, escaped my notice. In his more genial days, my father had inspired me with a taste for the sciences which trace the wonderful laws of nature in the animate and inanimate world around us; and, without any definite aim, but aided by an observant eye, I went on adding to my store of knowledge.

One of the former possessors of the Hall must have had a great liking for botany, mineralogy, and similar pursuits; for there were many old books, which assisted me in my studies, to be found in the library there, all marked and interlined in the same crabbed characters. It was not one of the laughter-loving, harebrained Irish ancestors of

the present Earl, but a member of an older race, to which the late Countess belonged. The Cedars came to the Earl by marriage, and constituted only a small portion of the property which he was running through, if report might be believed, with marvellous rapidity.

The library, to which I had free access, was a large and lofty room, containing a very extensive and antiquated collection of books. I used little ceremony with them. No one interfered concerning my coming or going, or the manner in which I employed my time there; and volumes which an antiquary would have handled respectfully often had a place in my pocket, together with flies for fishing, and a very miscellaneous collection of boyish treasures.

Yet I was not altogether unworthy to be trusted with those quaint old tomes; for often the trout leaped up unheeded, or escaped the hook, while in the deep shade of the summer foliage I was poring over the page. Whatever I learned was tested by actual experience. The wild sea-coast near me afforded ample scope for geological researches; and every bird that came within shot of my gun, every wild animal that crossed my path, was carefully examined, until I had discovered, as far as might be, the unerringly wise laws which regulated its being.

Another branch of my desultory studies was the attempt to investigate the various modes of living and habits of men, in countries which I knew only by name; their differing soils and climate, and the effect of each upon the races of the earth. In reflecting upon these subjects, I was much aided by the knowledge I had acquired—theoretically if not practically—of my father's profession, and by remarks which occasionally fell from him. Yet I had not the grace to acknowledge the debt, nor to gratify him by confessing that the time I apparently loitered away was not altogether misspent.

The house in the village grew more and more distasteful to me every day. My father's homely calling did not satisfy my ambition. To travel far and wide in quest of knowledge, and then to bestow the result of my inquiries upon the world, in some astonishing discoveries for the benefit of my fellow-creatures, were my dreams as I lay under the cedar-trees. Meanwhile, I did not absolutely neglect the duties of actual life. I worked long and hard at times to assist my father in his increasing labours; but my heart was not in the task. The moment I was at liberty, my steps instinctively turned to the gate into the park nearest to our house; of which, by the Earl's especial favour, I possessed a private key.

The high wall extended for more than a mile upward, from the heart of the village. The last straggling groups of hardy fir and pine in Lord St. Lo's grounds were also the most elevated points to which the vegetation of the valley extended ; but the house stood low down in the centre of the woods, and near deep, silent pools of water. The situation was regarded as an unhealthy one ; and it was said that the Earl's second wife had a mortal aversion to the idea of a residence where her predecessor had perished.

I do not know how that might be, but, certainly, I did not wish the family to visit The Cedars. The Earl's keepers often elated my youthful vanity, by coming for directions to me, as the only sportsman authorised to disturb the game. In the twilight, I saw the long porticoes and columns of the building, which was in the Italian style, with ornamental bridges crossing the stream, and, now and then, a solitary, mossy statue, looking damp and chill among the evergreens ; and I loved even the miasma which gathered over the deep pools and low, damp lawns. Had the place been more cheerful and salubrious, others would have admired it : gay voices would have called to each other from the sculptured balustrades ; the boat I had so carefully nailed together and caulked would

have been manned by other rowers. My privileges and imaginary power would have passed from me. The white house among the cedars would no longer have been mine.

CHAPTER II.

OFTEN, in distant lands, my heart has yearned to hear the sough of the retreating waves from the ridge of pebbles which alone saved our village from destruction. During the great gale of November, A.D. 1824, the sea rose so high that people escaped in boats from the upper windows of the cottages in the main street, which was flooded by water; and even in the sheltered grounds belonging to the Hall, the water was raised up from the bed of the stream and flung in wild wreaths of foaming vapour against, and even over, the tops of the tall trees that bordered the road opposite to our house.

In general, the fiercest storms scarcely penetrated into the low grounds of Lord St. Lo's park. You might hear the wind raging over-head and not feel it. Hardly could the gale stir those mighty cedar-branches. Their solemn, quiet gloom had a great attraction for me, even in boyhood; yet when I heard at a distance the tide coming in, and thunder-

ing against the bar, nothing could restrain me. The feeling which makes one man a sailor, another a soldier, while others love the more tranquil walks of life—that natural instinct which gives a bias to future existence—would rush upon me strongly. With the roar of the winds and waves in my ear—the mighty music which has sounded since our Maker's hand divided the waters that were above and below the firmament, and made the dry land appear, setting bounds to the sea, which it cannot pass over—I went down to mark the wild course the billows were running, as they chased each other up the steep inclined plane of shingle.

. At these stormy seasons, the seafaring population of the village were mostly abroad; the men looking out for waifs and strays, but ready to aid mariners, if vessels in distress hove in sight; the women straining their eyes to see through the white foam and blackening tempest the sail of some returning bark. The coast was very closely watched by the revenue-service men, but still many a contraband cargo was landed on dark nights and carried successfully across the beach. At the rude hostelries among the hills, the spirits imported by the bold smugglers cheered the hearts of travellers benighted among the bleak West-of-England downs.

There was one person who seemed to delight in rough weather even more than myself. I did not exactly know, at the time of which I am speaking, the habits of life, or former profession, of an elderly man whom, notwithstanding, I never passed by without notice. His boat was, apparently, as much the worse for wear as himself; and, in the stormy evenings, I saw him constantly mending it, whistling, as a sailor does in calm weather, for a wind, when all around the skies were black with coming tempest, while the rain poured unheeded over his slightly-grizzled, thick, dark hair, and ran off his rough but picturesque attire.

He was always dressed alike, winter and summer, in a tight-fitting jacket and trousers of faded reddish-coloured serge, with his feet and ankles bare, and the sleeves of his short jerkin turned back, to leave his brawny limbs free play. No matter how wildly the waves dashed up against the boatside, he would stand half in the water, despising their fury. Or he would launch his old boat fearlessly, when much younger men shrank from the danger, if he saw from the shore any article he thought worth the risk—wreck-timber, or an empty cask floating on the waves, which might serve him as winter firewood.

I never saw him put off to the assistance

of any vessel in distress. Even when a great shoal of mackerel darkened the waves, his boat lay high and dry on the beach, and he did not offer to push off, or lend a hand to bring in the heavy loads which were well-nigh sinking the boats. He was not a fisherman, he said, but a sailor; and a sort of pride was displayed by the way in which he kept aloof from the crowd, chaffering in the street, after he had laid in his own store—a capital bargain.

Out of the wreck-timber he had built for himself a hut upon the beach, where the land joined the shingle ridge, and here he would lie for hours watching the squalls come up from the west, and, to my fancy, enjoying the mischief they wrought. Often, when I was a boy, I would go down and listen to his tales. Though I shuddered at the vindictiveness of his looks and words, I liked to hear those wonderful stories again and again.

He had been—at least so it seemed to my boyish apprehension—in every country under the sun, and his narratives fostered the love of rambling and thirst for stirring adventures, which formed the strongest features of my character. What was the cold teaching of books compared to the simple words that came from lips which had given forth a wild shout when, at last, after unnumbered perils,

the vein of virgin gold was found? Here was a man whose hands had been plunged in the waters that played over lumps and bars of that costly metal for which, in England, we toiled so hardly! It was true that he was miserably poor;—he had thrown away and squandered opportunities, but the red gold was still there—he had touched it,—there for more fortunate beings than himself,—had been only lost to him by a thousand strange and vexing chances which others might escape!

Then, again, he would tell me of the tricks of the slave-traders and the sufferings of their human victims. I did not stop him to ask how he had seen and known many circumstances which he mentioned to me, for, in truth, I was very much afraid of him; but I lay on the shingles, hearing all he chose to narrate to me, and forming vague guesses, full of interest, at what he kept concealed.

“It’s better afloat than ashore,” he said one day, when he had finished mending his tattered sail, and was lying within the low entrance to his hut, peering out at the weather. “When I was a youngster, not bigger than those lads prawn-fishing yonder—they’ll catch plaguy few to-night!—I had crossed the Line, and seen the Southern Cross dip down beneath the water in another hemisphere. You’d like it, Master Charles, I’ll engage, better than

physicking old women, and holding the mare for the Doctor, when he goes up among the hills to see sick folk. Why, even for that, there are better drugs in the leaves and roots than your father sells us; yes, and poisons, too, as I learned among the Indians, that will bring a man's hair off, and cover him with blisters, which only the touch of the plant Nature made to heal him can cure. I wouldn't take a drop of the Doctor's physic for the world! In the woods, if you're taken with fever or ague, it's kill or cure with the natives; and you know it, and have to put up with it. Better die when your time comes than linger on, neither sick nor well, dragging life after you like a lengthened curse."

He started up from his recumbent posture, just as the sun shone forth clearly for a moment across the dark-heaving waters, before we lost sight of it again beneath a thick canopy of clouds.

"What's that floating out to sea?" he said; "a cask, or staves? Lend a hand, lad, and we'll launch the boat and fetch it in. As well have it snug in the old house here, as broken to pieces in the water. Would you like to come along with me, young master? I sometimes think you are the right sort, after all, for a sailor."

Right glad was I to hoist the curiously-

patched, dark yellow sail, on which the low sunbeams gleamed as it flapped wildly in the blast. The old sailor trusted me, and I was proud of his confidence. Swiftly, ducking like a sea-bird, and shaking off with a shudder the foam from her bows, the boat sped through the waves towards the dark spot on the crest of a distant billow, which had attracted Matthews's attention. I knew well that I should have been severely reprimanded at home for the mad venture; and, perhaps, I liked it all the better on that account. The old tub or plank was of no value to me; yet I was just as much set upon rescuing it from the sea as the hardy, weather-beaten sailor.

A wild puff of wind curled the waves, the sail caught it, and we veered round; but I heard the seaman's rapid directions and obeyed them. In a few moments we had picked up our trophy, and were on our homeward way, running before the breeze. The old boat leaked, and would require more mending than ever, after our return. Matthews whistled as he steered, in defiance of the freshening breeze, and we ran the boat on the shingle-beach, as skilfully as any of the fishermen who watched us from a distance could have done.

I dare say my companion was disappointed with the prize he had brought home. It was nothing but the fragment of a boat, with the

name upon it of the ship to which it had belonged. He carried the plank up to his hut, after landing, with more care than at first he seemed disposed to bestow upon it.

“So, you’re a bit of one of the Hogue’s boats!” he said, with a dissatisfied growl, addressing the senseless piece of wood, as he threw it down on the threshold. “Hard and tough, yet you’ve found your master! The sea rent it, and forced out the nails. Look how the holes are jagged and the timber splintered! yes, and the iron itself twisted. But there’s a heart that’s harder than oak on board that three-decker, if she’s afloat still; Pharaoh’s wasn’t prouder and more arrogant; it’ll take a deal to humble him. You see, Master Charles, ships are like most other places, — there’s good and bad in them; but the worst is, if he’s ever so hard-pressed and put upon at sea, a man can’t run away. There’s some have leapt overboard, and swum to an island; but, ten to one, they starved, or were caught, and brought back to England in irons. Best, after all, to stop where you are and bear the worst, if a man could but think so.”

“I hope the ship rode out the gale as well as we did,” I said, triumphantly. “We shall hear of plenty of wrecks, if the wind holds as high as it is now in its present quarter.”

“That’s true enough. Blow high or blow low, there’s danger when the captain’s too proud to take advice, and too rash and ignorant to do without it; and sleeps in his cabin all the sounder for the rush of winds and waves, or the voices of the crew cursing him. I’ve seen the decks red with blood that wasn’t shed in fight,—drops that fell from stripes on Englishmen’s backs, which were not sorer than the spirits that brooked them.”

He kicked the plank into the hut as he spoke, with a wrathful look.

“Yes, and I’ve seen the hearts of those poor crushed worms rise at last, more, perhaps, for a kind word spoken than for all they suffered. But it was no good! The captain’s like a king on his own quarter-deck, and after he leaves it not a word is to be said against him. The good of the service, forsooth!—that’s their cant; and the great lords hush it up, and compliment each other; while the poor devils of seamen are put in irons, and even their officers, if they dare speak up for them, are down on the Black List, and punished as insubordinate.”

“If this is the case,” I said, “I wonder you should recommend me to go to sea; but I believe such instances of cruelty as you appear to have witnessed are rare in our navy.”

“Oh, it’s a fine thing to sail in a ship like

the one that boat parted from!" exclaimed the old seaman, changing his tone so suddenly that I hardly knew whether his praise were ironical or sincere. "You won't see anything like it! When the captain's friends come on board, and the band plays, and the signal that the ladies and gentlemen are dancing flies at the mast-head! It isn't always that the wind blows great guns, as it does to-day. There's fine weather at sea as well as on land; and it's nowhere pleasanter than when a great ship's in harbour, with plenty of gay company on board, and the anchor's lifted to the boatswain's whistle, the crew are piped up, and a good eight hundred jolly tars on deck, all ready and willing to do their duty. To see the sails fill, and the huge floating castle glide through the water, with cheers and good wishes to speed her! Be sure they're all happy! What can they want more than their grog and their pay? Keep 'em on board, and work 'em hard! Don't let 'em get a sniff of the land-breeze, nor a plunge in fresh water to wash the brine out of their skins!—it only puts thoughts of freedom into their heads. Best clap them under hatches, if they're seditious, and give them plenty of rope's-end to quiet 'em!"

He turned into his hut, almost without noticing my "Good night;" and I hurried

home, knowing that my father, probably, was waiting for me.

I remembered the name I had read upon the piece of wreck-timber, when I heard, a few days afterwards, that the Hogue man-of-war, a ninety-gun line-of-battle ship, had narrowly escaped foundering in the late tremendous gale; and that one of her boats, with a full crew, which had left the vessel, contrary to orders, had been lost in the West Bay. The Honourable Adolphus St. Lo, second son of the nobleman to whom most of the property round Moraston belonged, was named as the midshipman in command.

CHAPTER III.

My father, booted and coated, was waiting impatiently on the steps before our door when I came home, after aiding the old seaman to pick up the fragment of the Hogue's boat. Edward was not to be found, and Henry busy with his books, and I was wanted to accompany my father on one of his long rounds of country practice, to hold the reins at cottage-doors that lay among lonely hills, and to visit a distant farm-house, where one of his more profitable patients was slowly dying.

I thought of Matthews's anathemas against physic, while my father, as we went along, talked of this case. It was an utterly hopeless one. Nothing could be done but to alleviate pain. Art could prescribe no fresh remedy; but still the man might linger long, a burden to himself and others. As the sharp wind cut against us on the bleak hill-side, up which we wearily travelled, I remembered the moment when I had met a fiercer blast proudly on the sea. The toilsome round we were pur-

suings seemed unendurable to me, as I waited under the corner of some barn-yard wall for my father, watching the light burning in the sick-chamber.

I did not hear the kind words, the soothing suggestions, which made the dwellers in those solitary places regard their doctor's visits almost in the light of an angel's ministrations; neither did I trace the kindly feelings welling up in my father's breast, as he buttoned his strong vestment over his chest, and sat silent, after quitting the house of grief. Fast through the gullies of the hills, across flooded brooks, and over the bleak crowns of the heights, I hurried him, stopping often, however, sorely against my will, at hovels where sickness had found its way, though other visitants seldom penetrated,—dropping balm into aching hearts, and lightening many a load of anxiety, of which, at that time, I thought nothing, as I chafed at our frequent stoppages, and drove on after each delay, more impatiently than ever.

The last pause we made was at a farm, high up among the hills, but sheltered by still more commanding heights from the tempest. I thought the wind had lulled when we turned the exposed angle of the down, and saw the trees bending under their autumnal load of ripe apples, scarcely one of which had yet

fallen in the orchard of The Knowle, as the residence of Farmer Brand was called. Among the fruit-trees were some very ancient yews, and the old-fashioned dwelling-house was surrounded with trimly-cut hedges and quaint imitations of bird and beast, carved out of the same unfading verdure. There were dark-green peacocks, with their tails spread out, fan-like, on either side of the gate.

Whether, as now, with the cheery sparkle of the lights glimmering through the trees at nightfall, or in the long hot summer days, The Knowle had always appeared to me a pleasant place. My father's stringent regulation, that we were to accept no offers of hospitality, was relaxed in favour of Mrs. Brand, who always came out curtseying and smiling to welcome us, her ruddy face very much resembling the sunny side of one of her own Katharine pears. As boys, we had the run of the fruit-garden, where sunny beds of strawberries lay between thick rows of currant and gooseberry bushes, and the raspberries were as large as mulberries. Old Farmer Brand was hale and hearty at nearly eighty, and rode about his fields, which extended along the broad slopes of the hills, watered by a copious stream ; and over the rugged sheep-walks on the down, where his large flocks fed on the thymy herbage. His second son, Hezekiah, managed the farm for him, the

eldest having left home, nearly thirty years before, after grievously misconducting himself, and never having been heard of since. Hezekiah Brand had married, and brought his wife to live with the old couple at 'The Knowle. Children were born to them year after year, and all went on well, until the health of the industrious, temperate man failed him. He was wasting away rapidly in a decline, and though Mrs. Brand had still a good store of household comforts to set before us, her tears ran over as she told my father of the progress her son's hopeless malady had made since his last visit.

There were boys whom we knew well, for we often, on summer evenings, played cricket on the green at Moraston together; and one tall, bright-eyed, handsome girl, whom I had sometimes helped to shake the apples from the trees in the orchard, or to catch some of the young pea-fowl, when they strayed away from the coops that stood on each side of the door in the grassy courtyard. I was very sorry for Kate, when I saw her sitting beside the hearth with her fingers twisted, and her hands tightly clasped together. I watched her deep silent grief with a kind of awe, as she sat motionless, with the red light of the great burning logs of wood streaming on her neatly-braided dark hair, and glittering on the large drops that

fell from her eyes. I can see her now, and time, as it gives back to me that image, hallowed by many a sorrowful thought, has taught me to know better than I did when my eyes first received it, how fair a thing it was!

When my father came down-stairs, he sent us all out of the kitchen, and remained long after I had got the gig ready for him, talking with the old grandfather. I believe that his sound, upright counsel often saved the country people from incurring legal charges, or rashly involving themselves in difficulties. It would have been well if Mr. Brand had now followed the advice he gave him, to send for a lawyer at once, and have his affairs settled. The poor fellow, who was dying in the room above, had confessed how much it troubled his mind that he could make no provision for his wife and large family. Stranger things had happened than the return of his elder brother, the long-lost, prodigal son, from abroad, when he might turn them all away from The Knowle, if he so pleased, unless the old man, before he died, should dispose of his property in their favour. He had an invincible dislike to making his will, and, even if he agreed to the expediency of the measure, would put it off on trivial pretexts, from day to day.

My father's words seemed to make an impression at the time, but it was very transi-

tory. The old farmer, after being a little ailing, rallied, and was able to attend as chief-mourner at his son's funeral. The church-yard at Moraston was crowded with people, for Hezekiah Brand and his family were greatly respected. After the crowd dispersed, I was surprised at seeing the rough, weather-beaten seaman from the beach standing beside the newly-made grave. In general, he avoided all rustic gatherings, and I had not noticed him on this occasion till the service was over.

He turned sharp round when he saw me.

"Here's another of your father's patients gone, Master Charles! Pretty care he must have taken of him! It's a wonder to see how they drop off. Physic is not magic. Here am I, who haven't taken a grain of it these twenty years, and I dare say I shall see out a good number of them yet. That poor fellow was younger than I am—it must have been his family that troubled him. What a line of them there was! It reached fairly from that big elm-tree to the spot where they laid him. His father's stout enough still—if the doctor lets him alone, he'll be a tough one. What brought all those folk here, I wonder? I suppose it's much the same to them whether the bells ring for a wedding, or toll for a funeral. For my part, I think the last's the cheerfulest sound of the two. Better to

put one man to his rest quietly than see another set the stamp to his folly! As for christenings, they're worst of all. Just look at that string of little beggars who were here a few moments since. They've been the death of their father; and that white-faced woman, their mother, will soon follow him. I wonder what good they'll ever be of in the world!"

He moved off as he spoke, and went grumbling out of the churchyard, knocking his stick against the gravestones, and now and then stopping to look at them as he passed. We neither of us thought, at the time, that the hale-looking old man, Farmer Brand of The Knowle, would follow his son to the grave in a few weeks—but so it was. He was struck by paralysis the night after the funeral, but rallied sufficiently the next day to bid his eldest grandson ride the best horse in the stable to fetch the lawyer, that he might do as Doctor Frankland advised him. Before his senses were clouded again, he made a hasty disposition of his property, leaving it unreservedly to his wife, and omitting altogether to name his son's widow and children. It was a warning, my father said, not to procrastinate. He had lived beyond the age allotted to man, yet died at last without having made fitting preparation.

The next time we visited The Knowle, Dame Brand was too much afflicted even to think of offering me the home-made cakes she used to press upon me long after I ceased to be a boy. The children were crying under the fan-tailed peacocks in front of the house, and I saw that the quaint devices on either hand, usually so carefully trimmed, had grown out rather wildly. When my father came out, he said that all was over; and the blinds were drawn down, and shutters closed in the ordinarily cheerful, pleasant chambers, as we drove away.

It was a boyish fancy which often carried me back to the Hall, and under the stately cedars, after a day of successful sport, instead of by the direct road to my home in the village. I liked to pass along the avenues where few but myself were allowed to tread, and to hear the footsteps, which I strove to render as manly as I could, ring in the empty marble-paved passages. The old servants who had charge of the mansion humoured me. I believe they led such a lonely life, that my presence was a kind of comfort to them, and they had seen me free of the place, by their lord's will, for years. The housekeeper would kindle a fire in the library for me when she saw me come in wet and weary; and I sat there, reading the quaint volumes, and gazing out into

the park through the high windows, till darkness hid the view.

As my dripping garments dried upon me, my young, strong frame, defying the effects of carelessness and exposure, would glow with happy exultation. None of the old possessors of The Cedars gloried in their fine residence more than the boy who stretched his tall limbs towards the blaze, as the flame crackled and sparkled, and the boughs cast upon the hearth split asunder with the heat. The fire-light, I knew, was visible to many a poor simple hind crossing the fields on the other side of the river; and from the bridge, where strangers were taken for the best view of the Hall. I knew how well the large windows looked, illuminated within by that cheerful blaze, and I piled the logs higher and higher, in case any passenger turned his head to gaze, that he might see the place I loved to advantage.

Little cared I for the rain, though I must face it presently; but I liked to hear it beat against the glass, and drip slowly through the cedars. As I lay in my own attic chamber, with my curtains open, after the first sound sleep which followed the active exertions of the day was over, I saw the earliest streak of dawn redden the horizon, and then the daylight stream in through the straight boughs of

the distant cedars, and under the dark crowns of the pines. Glowing with the fiery touch of the sun-rays, the usually gloomy foliage seemed begirt with glory. I believe that very few knew, as well as I did, how beautiful the Earl's park was in the early light of morning.

As the sun rose above the low hills that sloped away to the east, his beams travelled across a stretch of wooded scenery, till they reached the groups of evergreens, through and under which they pierced, glittering on the dewy grass, and throwing spangles of light on the river. The birds singing in the tufted trees, the radiance on wood and stream, seemed more than ever to belong to me, as I lay watching, with sleep still brooding over the lazy world of men, that grand awakening of Nature in the groves and over the glancing waters, visible from the upper story of my father's dwelling.

The Earl came down to Moraston for a week's pheasant-shooting this October. His gay encouragement and cordial praises, when I brought down my bird, as the covey scattered right and left before our shots, warmed my heart, and I did not listen to the many tales current of the pressure upon the tenantry caused by his extravagance. I could not believe that pleasant, frank-spoken man, really guilty of duplicity and heartlessness.

When he left The Cedars, Lord St. Lo told my father that it might be years before he visited the place again, as he was going abroad for the education of his children by the second marriage, and meant to reside permanently on the Continent. Lady St. Lo and her young family appeared to occupy his thoughts almost exclusively; and the name of the poor boy who had been lost at sea never passed his lips.

“Such a man is not worthy to be called a father!” said Lieutenant Salcombe, the officer lately appointed to the coast-guard station, half a mile distant from our village. “I have heard a good deal about Harcourt’s tyranny. Why, a friend of mine was on board the Hogue when poor young St. Lo took the long-boat to go ashore without leave, and was cast away in the storm. Temple thought the youth had been hardly treated — and he is a strict disciplinarian; but when I tried to say a word in the drowned boy’s favour to his own parent, he pooh-pooh’d the intelligence.”

My father, who, although they were in the main excellent friends, generally differed in opinion from our excitable neighbour, took Lord St. Lo’s part on this occasion. The Earl, he said, might have suffered too much from his son’s misconduct to like to speak upon the subject.

“No, no ; he is not the man to take a thing seriously to heart. He is the merest trifler, and never went to the bottom of an affair in his life !” exclaimed Salcombe, hotly. “Look at his Irish tenantry—see the abuses perpetrated on his estate here ! Why, the greater part of the men are poachers or smugglers. We have more trouble with his cottagers than with all the rest of the district. I will answer for it, more than one will be in gaol this winter, and then what is to become of their families ? You won’t tell me that a man who lives abroad, and gambles away his income, is likely to be either a good father or landlord ! I agree with Charles, that you will nowhere find a pleasanter companion for a day’s shooting than his lordship. A finer-looking man I don’t desire to see ; perhaps Nature intended him for a different kind of being from what he is daily becoming. But, in the more intimate relations of life, his conduct and example are pernicious. Just now his young wife and her children are objects of idolatry. I dare say it was the same, for a time, with the poor lady whose grave he passes, without a tear or sigh, in the churchyard of Moraston.”

My father’s brow contracted slightly.

“Men cannot make a display of such sacred emotions, Salcombe. The Earl, perhaps, feels

more than you imagine. He has certainly never liked Moraston since her death, but I did not expect him to remain single."

"That may be; but he need not neglect her children!" said the energetic sailor. "Adolphus St. Lo's case was a hard one;—of that I am convinced. Now, will you just tell me whether his father is a man whose character justifies him for pronouncing an unmerciful sentence? Did he never get into a scrape at school or college?—rob an orchard, break bounds, or, in fact, commit some such flagrant act of insubordination as this poor lad has paid for with his life? I will engage, worse sins lay at his door, before he was one-and-twenty, than this youngster committed. Mind you, I would not take his part, if it were not for Temple's vindication! Discipline must be enforced; but when it goes beyond the regulations of the service, as has been the case more than once on board the Hogue, it becomes cruelty. Young spirits, Mr. Frankland, can't stand it. Here's your boy, Charles! Just fancy his receiving an insult no gentleman's son is bound to endure; not a lawful punishment, but a blow struck in the heat of passion by his commanding officer. Well, what does he do? Anything that is most mad and intemperate! And what follows? A puff of wind catches the lug-sail, and in his

passion, in his temporary insanity, the poor young fellow is cut off before his prime. What would you do, or I, or any other father, who was not a peer of the realm? Should we not take all pains, and know no rest, night or day, leave no stone unturned, till the case was investigated? Our small means, our busy lives, would not prevent our sifting out the truth; and, at all events, rescuing our son's memory from disgrace, instead of consigning it to oblivion."

My father, softened, perhaps, by Salcombe's appeal to his paternal feelings, was silenced; and I think his interest in the first Countess made him (though from habit he had contradicted his friend) in his heart incline to the same view of the case. He had been somewhat severely tried lately by acts of indiscretion and exhibitions of temper on the part of my eldest brother, who was of a more extravagant disposition than accorded with the habits of our household. Edward liked society of a gayer kind than was consistent with my father's strict principles; and he was in love for the first time. His engagement was an imprudent one, and had not yet received the paternal sanction; but when time should have tested the stability of his attachment, my father was not likely to drive him to despair by over-severity. He had but to be patient, if

he wished to overcome present difficulties. Our younger brother was working hard, preparing for college. As for me, when released from my morning duties, I went unquestioned with my dogs and gun over every part of Lord St. Lo's noble domain, which, sometimes cultivated to the highest degree, elsewhere became as wild as the surrounding downs and commons.

That year was the first when we began to hear that the deer in Lord St. Lo's park had been shot by poachers. Hitherto the villagers had looked with a certain degree of pride on the Earl's Chace, but the family had been so long absent, that the interest once felt in them was passing away. The tenantry were discontented, and the poor murmured at the cessation of benefits and charities from the Hall, so that altogether an evil spirit prevailed.

I was coming home late one evening across the western extremity of the park, which was enclosed by a high deer-fence, dividing it from trackless, gorse-covered downs. The ground in this remote spot was hilly and broken, with here and there an oak-tree standing out alone among fern and heather, and the sweeping lines of seared foliage softly descending with the slope of the banks into a grassy hollow. Along this dewy glade, where the moon was shining brightly on the wet twinkling blades

of the reeds and fern-stalks, there came, as I stood looking down it, a noble stag, trotting fearlessly on its way, doubtless to join the herd of his companions under the distant trees. I never beheld a finer creature; — the sylvan scene seemed truly fitted for him, and he tossed his proud antlered head, and glanced with his bright eyes towards either side, shyly, indeed, but yet unconscious of present danger.

He had gone past, and I saw him speeding up the grassy slope of the hill-side, his tall, graceful shape casting a distinct shadow on the moonlit sward, when suddenly his firm, swift pace was arrested. A shot resounded through the wooded glen, and the splendid creature I had been watching bounded forward, and then fell prostrate on the turf. His dying cry, the saddest sound I ever heard, came through the sighing leaves, like the wail of a child whose heart is breaking with sorrow. It reminded me of the grief of the Earl's little daughter on the day when we were both left motherless; and I thought, with indignation almost as great as if some ruffian had harmed the young, delicate girl, of the vagabonds who had stained the green grass with the blood of the stately stag.

Perhaps my presence was discovered; for, after the shot, not another sound was heard.

I did not go nearer to the spot where the antlered king of the forest was lying, but, resolving to let Lord St. Lo's keepers know what was going forward in the park, I turned in the direction of the head forester's lodge.

The way was up a deep woodland glade, and, even by the shortest path, more than a mile of uneven ground had to be traversed. As I passed a dense thicket, I fancied that a light twinkled in the grass, and I distinctly heard a dog bark. Rashly enough, I pushed through the trees, and in a moment found my progress arrested. When the lantern was flashed in my face, my captors recognised me, and I saw that their force consisted of several of the Earl's keepers, with supernumeraries hastily enlisted, who were on the watch for the poachers.

They told me that others were on the look-out about the park, and that the marauders could not well escape them. The shot whose effect I had witnessed had been heard very plainly, but their orders were to remain in their present ambush until a given signal.

I took my stand with them, and waited crouching among the underwood, and maintaining the most profound silence. In about half an hour a slight crackling of the boughs

set us on the alert, and presently a doe and her fawns came through the trees and began feeding in the more open space in front of us. The men lay quite still, but the doe soon seemed uneasy, and left off grazing. Then, trooping along in haste, with their light limbs and graceful heads, the whole herd of deer swept past us.

The next instant, shots rattled among the leaves, and the pretty dappled doe, with one of her fawns, lay on the grass, while the rest of the herd rushed swiftly away. I was forcibly held back till the deer-stealers, deceived by the silence which followed the discharge of their guns, began to steal forth from the opposite thicket towards the spot where lay the carcasses of their victims. After they had quitted their shelter, the keepers sprang forward, and a sharp fight ensued. I was too much of a boy not to relish the excitement of the fray, and laid about me, like the others, till I saw one of the poachers club his gun and strike Duncan Geddes, the Scotch keeper, a felling blow upon the head. My blood was roused, and I snatched up, with an oath, the man's gun, which he had dropped, and would have fired it at the rascals, but for his preventing me. His stern rebuke, uttered in a faltering voice, shamed me, and I knelt down silently by his side, and bound up the severe wound he had received.

By the time this was done, one or two of the deer-stealers had been taken, and the rest made their escape. His companions placed Geddes on a hurdle to carry him home, but the deadly faintness which came over him more than once made them pause, and the rough-bearded men looked anxiously to me for advice. I felt proud to be of use, and knew enough of surgery to alleviate the pain, and stop the flow of blood; but I was surprised to see the tenderness these hardy fellows showed towards their wounded comrade. They measured their steps by what I thought he could bear, as with what haste they could, but treading cautiously, so as to spare him any painful jolt the ruts and stones might occasion, they bore him to his hut in the greenwood.

It was but a rude home, built of logs of wood and thatched with furze, while the boughs arched over it so closely that it was almost invisible to passers-by; yet as they crossed that humble threshold, each man of our company looked round him with an unmistakable expression of love and reverence, as if, under that low roof, each had received some heartfelt benefit.

Duncan Geddes was a young man, unmarried, and had not been long in the Earl's service. He held only a subordinate position, yet it was wonderful how soon his steady conduct and serious character won for him the

respect of his companions, some of whom were sad reprobates. Their rude songs had gradually been silenced; profane words and oaths were no longer uttered in presence of the young mountaineer. He had received a simple, solid education, and was possessed of a natural gift of eloquence, which aided the effect produced by his earnest piety upon his English brethren of the forest. Many were brought by his exertions to a knowledge of the truth as it had been revealed to him in the silent watches of the night, or when, as a boy, he tended his sheep among the hills, and pondered upon the teaching he had received, during the quiet hours of the solemn Scottish Sabbath.

As we laid him on his pallet, Duncan stretched out his hand to the shelf above his head, on which lay his Bible; but his eyes were not clear enough to see the small print of the double columns. The men looked to me as best able to read to them, but I felt humbled, and as if unworthy to open the sacred volume; nevertheless, I could not refuse the sick man's request. Though I knew the chapter well, it seemed, with those upturned, eager faces surrounding me, as if every word was new; while, now and then, in a deep, low tone, with his emphatic Scottish accent, the wounded keeper repeated the words of

salvation after me. When I had finished, I left him with those willing friends sitting beside him ; having done, as far as I could, all that was needful for the present, and promising to bring him better surgical aid on the morrow.

My father was quite at home in the forester's hut, and Duncan Geddes, it was evident, valued his pious conversation as much as his professional skill. I used to creep inside and listen to them, while the old mare cropped the long grass under the trees. A deep feeling of reverence for my grave parent grew upon me when I observed what familiar home truths those were to him which had come upon me with such startling force by the bedside of the young keeper.

I believe that he noticed my unusual attention, and that it gave him satisfaction to behold the change working in me ; but he was a man of few words, except when they were drawn forth by congenial sentiments, like those of his new patient. I am certain he never knew how long a time he spent by that rough pallet, for he would start, and utter an exclamation, if he perceived what long shadows the trees were casting when he came forth, and then take the reins into his own hand, and drive fast across the common, after emerging from the tangled forest track, to make up for the period which had unconsciously slipped away.

Duncan Geddes did not forget me after he recovered from the effects of his wound; and, strange to say, the strict, stern Presbyterian became my favourite companion. He had great corporeal strength and activity, which excited my boyish admiration; but still deeper was the impression which his strong sense of duty to his employer, his earnest faith and fervent piety, made upon my mind. To see this man, after a long, wearying day, sit down contentedly with his Bible in his hand, instead of joining in the amusements too common with his class, brought religion before me in a different shape from any in which I had hitherto regarded it. Many lessons which I had heard carelessly at home found their way to my heart when enforced by his strong, homely phrases, redolent of the North. Hours spent by the side of the trout stream in the grounds of The Cedars, or in night-watches in the loneliest parts of the park, which I often shared with my new friend, were not wasted. The good seed sown ripened in the quick soil of the young heart into which it was dropped. Duty, obedience, industry—hitherto cold, repulsive words—acquired a new meaning. I gave up idling away my time in vain reveries, and steadily set myself to do the work appointed for me, qualifying myself by its performance to the best of my abilities for the arduous life already opening before me.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH my father had two maiden sisters, living in a town twenty miles distant, to whom he had always been a kind brother, he did not, when my mother died, invite them to live with us. With some few exceptions, he was not partial to the society of ladies; and I never saw him, after her death, unbend as he used to do to amuse my mother in her last illness. The harder features of his character came out and grew stronger when he lost her, and he spent his few hours of leisure in study. Dinah was promoted to the office of housekeeper, and discharged its duties under strict and somewhat eccentric regulations of her master's, with which neither she nor any of his family ventured to interfere.

I saw my father read twice over—contrary to his usual habits of quick dispatch—a letter from Lord St. Lo, which the post brought one morning at our early breakfast hour. He handed it over to me, when at last he had finished it, and then walked to the window, where he stood looking steadily at

the row of pines opposite. Through the tree-stems his eye fell upon the glittering ponds near the Hall, and he could see how the wet left by recent heavy storms flooded the lower part of the park.

I heard him say to himself in an undertone,—“Poor child! It would never do for her to be there alone. She would soon follow her mother to the grave.”

He had fully made up his mind how to act, I am sure, before I came to the end of the first three florid phrases of the Irish nobleman's letter. When I understood its drift, I thought, in spite of his lavish protestations of affection, there must be a lack of feeling in her father's heart towards the motherless girl whom he expressed a wish to place under Mr. Frankland's care, during a visit which he intended her to make at The Cedars.

The health of his eldest daughter had always, he said, been extremely delicate, and the melancholy death of his young sailor-son—to which the Earl alluded in terms of poignant sorrow—had been felt with peculiar keenness by Lady Honoria. Adolphus was her favourite brother. They had fallen into a thousand headlong scrapes together. She had made excuses for every fault, and magnified each virtue the poor youth possessed; and it was impossible to say when her nervous

system might recover from the shock it had sustained, on hearing that his brief career was closed for ever.

She had been alternately drowned in tears and uttering wild, passionate reproaches, or lost in a state of hard, stony, speechless grief, since her arrival in town from their Irish mansion to join Lady St. Lo and himself, before their departure for the Continent. Their arrangements had been made for wintering abroad, under the idea that such a change would be beneficial to the whole family, after the distress they had all recently undergone ; but the Countess naturally found it quite beyond her powers to undertake, during their tour, the management of—he was afraid he must say—a somewhat refractory invalid ; and Lady Honoria very decidedly expressed her desire of remaining in England.

If my father would add to the important obligations already conferred upon Lord St. Lo, by devoting some portion of his valuable time and attention to the child, the Earl declared that he should be able to go abroad with a heart comparatively light. In case of his preferring to receive her under his own roof, instead of visiting her at the park, Lord St. Lo would be delighted to forward so desirable an arrangement. No doubt, if Mr.

Frankland had not been compelled, like himself, to provide for the comfort of his children by a second marriage, he had some female relative residing in his house who would bestow a mother's care on the young girl.

I looked at my father with more respect than I was feeling for the Earl, as I read this sentence. Deep in that kind heart, I well knew, lay the love for the dead mother of his children. If, in some small matters, we had missed a woman's tender care (and what man can ever fulfil a mother's offices of love?), at least he had kept her memory and her place in our house sacred. We had never trembled at the idea that he was going to give her a successor.

Lady Honoria's fate was different, and I pitied her sincerely. The delicate girl, an encumbrance to the Countess's movements, was to be sent to the low, damp burial-place of her mother—the sad scene of her own first deep grief, to recover amidst strangers from the blow which had fallen upon her so heavily. My indignation at Lord St. Lo's inhumanity was warmly echoed by my father.

“It is just like him,” he said. “The young wife and second family are everything now. This poor girl is only a painful memento of the past. I thought how it would

be, when he wanted to be buried in the same grave with his Honoria, and left a space for his own name to be inserted on her tombstone. Such violent grief seldom outlasts the twelvemonth."

He was silent. Memory carried him back to the dark November day when, with little outward sign of sensibility, he had seen the tomb close over his own every hope and joy—that day for which he had ever since worn mourning, not only outwardly, but in his heart of hearts.

"The child cannot go to 'The Cedars,'" he said, abruptly changing the subject. "She must come here. Let me see: how long is it since——" he paused, and added in a lower tone:—"She was five years old then; she must be fourteen now. It will be very inconvenient; but I cannot let her go to that unhealthy place at this season. Half the park is flooded."

"The waters were out by Marley ponds when I came past yesterday, I said. "The house is always damp in autumn, and next month is generally a very rainy one."

"To be sure it is. I must write to the Earl, and offer to receive her. He takes it for granted that we can find room, and conjures up a maiden aunt, expressly to take care of her. These great men think nothing of

the trouble they give. I suppose I must drive over and fetch Margery."

I dare say my countenance fell considerably. I was delighted with the prospect of a visit from the Earl's daughter; but my father's eldest sister, a stiff and starched old maid, was not likely to be so agreeable an acquisition.

On this point my father, whether he guessed my sensations or not, did not consult me, but wrote at once to Lord St. Lo. When the letter was sent to post, it was apparently dismissed from his mind. He went about his avocations as usual; but I heard him tell Galpin to give the mare a double feed of corn the next morning; and I had to visit some of his patients while he drove over, at his quickest pace, to the town where his sisters lived, since his marriage, on the interest of a sum of money which he had secured to them.

I thought Aunt Margery looked less angular than usual, when, in a shorter time than could have been expected, considering the long drive and her feminine preparations for a visit of some duration, my father brought his sister and her wardrobe back with him in the gig. She was not sufficiently at home among us, the first evening, to find as much fault as, I remembered, she used to do when we were children;

and I saw her eyes moisten as she glanced round the sitting-room my mother had occupied, but which, in my aunt's younger days, was the guest-chamber. After all, we none of us like changes in what we have been long accustomed to, and Aunt Margery always preferred in her heart the dingy parlour below, with its wire-blinds screening it from the turnpike-road, darkened by Lord St. Lo's trees, to the pretty apartment above-stairs, commanding a prospect of the park, which, after my father fitted it up for her as a drawing-room, was the joy of my mother's heart.

I liked our visitor better for not sitting down in the low chair by the window, which was scarcely ever used by any of us. Our grandfather's straight, high-backed seat suited her better than the *fauteuil* which had been Lady St. Lo's first present to my mother, and where I often fancied, still, that I saw her pale, sweet face smiling upon us, as when, during the last summer evenings of her life, she used to sit watching the sun decline behind the pine-trees.

Neither did Aunt Margery entertain any wish to occupy the sleeping-room on the opposite side of the passage, which my father had not entered since his wife's death, and which I had secretly appropriated to our other expected guest. Our respected maiden relative had

fancies of her own, and carried her bandbox, which she would allow no one to touch, while I bore her small portmanteau, to an antiquated chamber at the back of the house, once called the nursery, and running out, with a low, sloping roof, over the surgery.

This used to belong to her and to her sisters. No doubt the dark holes under the rafters, which she said, gravely, were mightily convenient for boxes, had been hiding-places and play-corners in her childhood, and the low window-sill on which she placed her looking-glass, to arrange the cap she had drawn forth from the bandbox, had some of the light of youth still shining upon it; for her face seemed smoother and softer, even to me, her saucy nephew, as she looked into it, and settled the perfectly smooth braids of her hair, before going down with me again. She said that it was too dark for me to perceive them, but I certainly could not discover many grey hairs among her still abundant tresses; and when she shook out the folds of her silk dress, after the crumpling it had experienced in the gig, I thought that, with a little less formality, my father's sister would have been an agreeable, ladylike-looking person.

The tea-table appeared much more comfortable than usual when my aunt presided over it, and my father, who was in the habit

of taking every meal after the most uncomfortable fashion, paid her the compliment of sitting down, on the present occasion, and remained with us till he was summoned to attend a patient. Edward went out after him ; but I thought it uncivil to leave my aunt alone, upon the first evening, for many years, which she had spent in our house. Old recollections were crowding upon her, as she sat looking down upon the quiet road past our door, on which in her youth she had gazed constantly. She told me of the changes she had seen, and of others, before her time, in the place ; and likewise more than I had ever known as yet about my mother, and the circumstances which had led to her marriage.

“ It was a sore trial to us, my dear, and we doubted whether it would be for my brother’s happiness. He used to say that ‘ medical men and the clergy should leave household cares alone,’ ” she observed, in a low and firm, but not unkindly, tone, as we sat in the twilight together. “ I am not going to say a word against Mrs. Frankland, except that she was too refined and pretty for her lot ; and Robert had always peculiar notions, which, perhaps, his sisters thought might have been more respected. But, after all, I dare say we should have spoilt him. He did not care a straw for things that were the very breath of her life, and he had

strong impressions against all kinds of luxury, and little prettinesses which there used to be about the house in her time; and, I can assure you, I miss them sadly. There was always a sweet scent of flowers in the room which I called faintish; but I should like it now. Ah, well! she is gone; and I believe there never was a better woman, nor one that was more shrined in her husband's heart. He has never got over losing her."

I did not answer, and my aunt went on talking, in the same quiet, musing way, while her fingers were busy with her knitting, which she never looked at, and her eyes rested on the trees opposite to the window, through which the evening sky and glimpses of the park-scenery were visible.

"I have often thought since that she was right, and we were wrong, about Robert, which is a good deal for me to own. All the changes that we grumbled at for costing money, and imagined were thrown away upon him, had their meaning, and answered their purpose, I dare say; though we were too short-sighted to see it. It was not his way to speak of his feelings; but I think it did him good when he came home to look out upon a bit of green, and to see the roses blooming in the garden. Men who lead hard lives, like your father, want loving, womanly ways about them,—not

chips of wood,—blocks as stiff in the grain as themselves, such as I and Mary have become!”

“I don’t see it aunt,” I said, taking her hand, as she laid down her work for a moment. “I am not much used to any lady’s society, but I think the house seems pleasanter, and more like what it ought to be, since you entered it.”

“I am glad you think so,” she said, hurriedly going on with her work. “When this young lady comes, we will try what we can do to make her like it. There was a link between her mother and yours that gives her a place in your father’s heart; and no man has a kinder one. I saw it, the moment he told me how sadly alone they were leaving her. You see, Charles, though he has a rough manner, like the rest of us, your father knows what constitutes a real lady, for a sweeter one never stepped the earth than your mother! How she came to fancy him I never knew—in his eternal brown coat and overalls!—but she loved him, in spite of all the opposition she met with from her mother, the Dean’s widow, who was quite a fine lady, and could not bear that her pretty daughter should marry a poor naval surgeon, with nothing to look forward to in life but a settlement in a country village, practising among parish paupers. She took Emily out of harm’s way, and travelled about,

giving her all kinds of advantages, but it was of no use. I won't say that, at the time, we should not have been glad if her plan had succeeded. Our own parents were set against the match, and Mary and I knew how much we should lose if the home to which we looked forward with Robert were broken up. We rejoiced when we heard he had a rival, and a formidable one, too, in a young nobleman whom the Dean, her father, had brought up; and that all his relations were courting her to come among them. But she stood firm against all, even her mother's tears and their blandishments, and wrote to Robert, who, as soon as he heard how she was beset with persecutions, set everything on one side, and went to claim her. He told them all to their faces that Emily was as good as his wife, and she confirmed it, and clung to him in spite of her gay friends and acquaintances, though he went just in his every-day suit, and spoke only the plain words of truth that sprang to his lips. They did not marry then, but, after one walk together—she in her pretty silks and finery, he in his old gaiters and tawny coat—they parted, fast bound to each other. He worked to gain a living for us, and, till my mother died, never said a word of what was in his heart. Then he helped my brother Henry to make a home for us, and settled all he had saved as our income, and went back and married his

true-love. I believe they went through great hardships, for she followed him cheerfully, while your Uncle Harry, who was just come back from the West Indies, took the practice here for a time. Your father held a coast-guard appointment, and Ned was born in a Martello-tower, where your mother spent the first year of her marriage, never murmuring, so they were together, at whatever privations attended her. Henry's death altered everything, and Robert came home to practise here, where his father had made himself respected before him. At first, we all lived together, but that did not quite answer; so, with much sorrow, we left the old house, and he and his wife altered it after their own fashion, and brought up their children as they liked best, without consulting us."

My aunt stopped suddenly, after the last sentence was concluded, as though she felt that there was a little of the old bitterness in her heart, and reproached herself on that account. Her eye fell on the low chair, empty beside the window,—on the table standing in the shadowy recess, where my mother's taste had placed it, and on the tall, white vase, still occupying its centre, but where no flowers bloomed. She did not speak again, but I saw that, diligently as she went on with her work, her hands trembled, and more than one tear dropped upon it.

CHAPTER V.

A GRIEF deeply felt in my childhood, but latterly wearing away, had been revived by my aunt's words, and it seems to me that I never missed my gentle mother's presence and softening influence in our house so much as on the day when we were expecting the Earl's daughter. Aunt Margery had done her best, and by dint of perpetual fault-finding on her part, and great exertion of patience on Dinah's, the load of litter we had accumulated was cleared away, and the house underwent a thorough reformation; but I do not think she understood anything about embellishing it. She had lived quite out of the world for several years with an invalid sister, and, excepting at rare moments, like those when, on the first evening after her arrival, she sat in my mother's drawing-room, with remorse for past unkindness knocking heavily at her heart, she was a woman of a strong practical turn of mind, in character not unlike my father.

I wondered at seeing him going about

as usual, and every now and then forgetting that we were expecting a visitor. Not one of earth's monarchs would have possessed the same claim upon my respect as the youthful daughter of the St. Loes. I should have liked much better to see her at The Cedars than in our village-home. The parlour seemed dark and low ; the drawing-room, cold and empty ; the private apartments destined for her miserably comfortless ; and Aunt Margery, in her stiff attire, the very reverse of attractive.

To my father, Lady Honoria St. Lo was a little wayward, ailing child, to whom he meant to be kind, and whom, at the cost of great inconvenience, he was receiving under his roof, as he would have done any other equally desolate girl, whose mother's dying eyes he had closed, and in whose behalf an appeal had been made to his benevolence. The kind and friendly adviser so often seated by the Countess's pillow, during those lonely hours of suffering spent by her at The Cedars, must have had many sorrows and anxieties confided to him. Lord St. Lo's hasty resolution to place his daughter under Mr. Frankland's care had, I have reason to believe, brought back to my father's mind her mother's pathetic lamentations at leaving her darling alone in a world which, at the last, had deserted her, and to the tender mercies of a

parent whose feelings she doubtless knew, though she never openly blamed him, to be as evanescent as his principles were unstable.

Though he had seemed more than ordinarily busy all day, my father was at the gate, when the carriage stopped, to receive the invalid girl. I never heard his voice so soft since he used to whisper comfort to his dying wife, as it sounded when he took the poor child in his arms and lifted her out, giving her a warm, fatherly embrace. I do not know how she received it, for a sudden shyness had come over me, and I went back into the passage, after watching more than an hour in the garden for her arrival.

The first thing that startled me, as I stood sulkily leaning against the window-seat, with my back to the glass, full of curiosity, but ashamed to show myself, was the sound of a sweet, clear voice, with a very decided Irish accent, speaking to my father. I looked through the window involuntarily, and saw a wild, sweet face, fresh as mountain-air could render it, with dew resting on the long eyelashes and flushed cheeks, and no visible sign of infirmity or ill-health in the lithe, elastic frame. Though her eyes were very dark and deeply shaded, Lady Honoria's complexion was as fair as it had been when I kissed her little, soft cheek, wet with the tears shed for

her mother. Her hair, only one shade darker, hung in the same light, loose ringlets. The tall, slight form seemed full of youthful energy; the delicately small foot trod the ground lightly; yet she stopped suddenly and panted for breath, as she mounted the three steps up to the door, and I saw my father look grave, and place his arm round her slender waist to support her.

“Well, we’ll not talk of it,” I heard him say, kindly. “A little quiet is certainly needed. You are at home, here, my dear; and I am glad your father and Lady St. Lo have chosen to confide you to me.”

“Please, then, don’t name them!” said the young girl, speaking, with a slight hesitation, in the accents which had sounded so flowingly as she came up the garden. “I mean, not my father, nor the Countess;—I can’t bear it. Another time, maybe, I’ll tell you why; but I couldn’t do it to-night.”

Her eyes looked perfectly black, as her heavy lids, with their long fringes, drooped over them. Suddenly a flash burst through the cloud, as she caught sight of the shy youth in the shadow of the doorway.

“What is it you’re hiding for? Why, it’s the boy that used to be kind to me, and once brought me the little dog to play with,

—the only living English creature that ever loved me. I'd have it now, only she took it from me. Why don't you come and speak to me?"

She held out her hand to me, and then gave it to Aunt Margery, who came out of the parlour to welcome her, and whose quiet manner seemed to calm the volatile creature. From the first moment she nestled up to my grave relative, as if her somewhat awful aspect had no terrors for her. She obeyed her implicitly, though a certain haughty gesture, checked instinctively, showed that it was not natural to her to be so submissive.

It was quite impossible to regard her without interest and admiration. Her exquisitely fair complexion, set off by the black of her deep-mourning attire, the careless rings of her fair hair, the grace of each unstudied movement of her slight form, and the sometimes plaintive, sometimes joyous, intonations of her sweet voice, were indescribably fascinating.

When the servants came in to prayers,—the only habit in our house which was punctually observed,—Lady Honoria looked surprised, and as if totally unprepared for what was to follow. Her eyes were fixed on my father's grave countenance with a kind of wonder, as he emphatically expounded the

Scriptures, after a short petition that we might interpret them rightly. Then she knelt down by the side of Aunt Margery, and I could not help listening for the voice which seemed to me borrowed from the breeze that might hover above Irish lakes and rivers, as it faintly responded. After this, she seemed quite at home among us, and went up and kissed my father and my aunt, as if she had been their own child, before retiring for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

I HAD been very much affronted with Aunt Margery, on the day when the great setting-straight of our house was going forward, for putting out of sight the model-frigate, rigged, with the assistance of my sailor-friend, Matthews, like a man-of-war, which had hitherto occupied a place of honour on the side-board of the dining-parlour. It struck me that she had a good motive for hiding it, when I found Lady Honoria, the morning after she came, crying bitterly over the little ship, which she had discovered far back on a deep shelf of a press that stood open on the landing-place of the attic story.

I dare say the young girl felt very lonely on awaking in a strange dwelling. The roaring of the sea, she said, had aroused her. The tide was coming in very loudly over the pebble-bar, and she could not remain in bed. Most likely it was the first time in her life that she had dressed herself without help; and she had crept up to the highest part of the

house, where she saw that there was light shining down from a window upon the staircase, to obtain a view of the ocean.

There was no one stirring in the house but ourselves, for our family were not systematically early risers. The girl sat crouched up on the window-sill, her long, slender limbs gathered under her, her arms crossed over her bosom, which was heaving with emotion, while her dark, troubled eyes glanced now at the toy I had fabricated, then rested on the distant line of sea. She did not move or speak when I approached her, further than to draw the folds of her white morning frock away, as if to make room for me to sit down by her ; and I did so without hesitation.

All the colour which had given her an appearance of health, the evening before, had vanished. Her cheeks were deadly pale, and beneath her eyes were deep shadows, which made them seem larger. The ringlets were all carelessly braided back from her forehead, unskilfully fastened up, and half escaping from the comb which was intended to hold them. Her brow was painfully contracted, and her small hands appeared clenched with the vehemence of one who is struggling as much with rage as grief.

For more than a quarter of an hour, we sat there without speaking, watching the white

crest of each foaming wave advance higher and higher on the ridge. My thoughts had flown, at sight of her distress, to where hers, no doubt, were fixed. I saw the Hogue, after which I had named my model-frigate, proudly sailing on her course, her white canvas swelling in the breeze, and, in her wake, like a speck upon the silver sea, the boat upon the waters. Then the sudden squall, the dangerous lug-sail carelessly handled, a wild cry, and the rendering up of a young life, and a soul buoyant with aspirations, such as filled my own heart, into the hands of its Creator.

“Is it poor Adolphus you are thinking of?” Lady Honoria said, at last, bending forward, and startling me out of my reverie, when I found that her large, wild eyes were turned upon me. “I thought no one was sorry for him but me. Is that why you named the little ship the Hogue? I wish you would give her to me.”

“I am sorry you found it, since the sight has grieved you,” I answered; “but, if you would really like to have it, it is yours. I began to carve it several years ago, and, last summer, an old sailor on the beach taught me how to rig it.”

I stopped, for I was afraid to tell her what had suggested the name; but the wild eyes

were fixed upon me with a sort of resistless power, and the words were drawn forth against my will.

“One day, after a storm, we picked up in a raging sea part of a boat belonging to the ship after which I named my vessel. If you like, I will try to procure that relic for you.”

I never beheld such a storm of weeping as shook the poor girl's frame, while we sat together on the old oak window-ledge.

“Ah, now, I'd give all, and more than all, I am ever likely to be worth in the world for it!” she said, at last, in a hoarse whisper. “Is it gold the old seaman wants? Oh, buy it for me!”

“Will you ask him for it yourself?” I said, for I scarcely knew how to work upon Matthews's sullen nature, and I thought her grief might move him. “Are you afraid to go down to the beach with me? It is a longer walk than it appears from this window.”

The girl sprang up in an instant. “I am coming,” she said simply, and slid noiselessly down the stair, and into her room. The next moment, she stood beside me in a large, low-crowned hat, with black feathers drooping over the brim, and a rough cloak. The fastenings on our doors were slight, and we went out without disturbing any one.

I took her by the shortest way to the

beach, through the low grounds of her father's park, only avoiding such spots as my knowledge of the place told me would now be flooded. We went past the large withy-bed, with its embankment, and the sluices which were made use of to ensnare the wildfowl that frequented the marshes; and then we ascended the pebble-ridge. As we mounted it, the wind blew very wildly, but my companion faced the blast fearlessly. I observed her shudder, nevertheless, when we reached the summit, and saw before us the wide, foaming ocean.

The thunder of the roaring billows would have drowned any words she might utter; but I knew her wish, and guided her to the hut which Matthews had constructed on the beach.

His boat was hauled up on the shingles, and the door made fast: I called and knocked, but no answer came. At last I put my hand into a hole above the door, where the seaman sometimes placed the key of his dwelling before going on the water, and drew it forth.

The hut was empty, and no clue left to discover where its owner might be found. There had been no fire kindled lately on the hearth, and his few possessions had mostly disappeared; yet I had never heard of his departure. Lady Honoria was bitterly disappointed,

but I promised to make inquiries about him, and, if possible, get for her the fragment of the lost boat. She was forced to be satisfied, but she pulled her hat over her brow as we returned, and neither sea nor sky obtained another glance from her.

The window-shutters of the house were open when we came back, but no one had missed us. Lady Honoria went to her own room, silently and quietly, and I did not see her again till later in the morning, when she was quite differently dressed, in black. The young girl looked sadly weary, before evening, of that first, long, dull day spent in a small country-house, and must have felt the unoccupied hours hang heavily on her hands. She had no work—those slender fingers were quite unskilled, apparently, in the use of the needle. All she did with them was to thread my aunt's needles for her; and, I believe, the good old soul worked faster than usual when she found that the melancholy face beside her lighted up with pleasure at her asking for this slight assistance.

All my aunt's questions respecting her acquirements elicited only the same monosyllable in reply. She did not draw or play—she had never had lessons in French, Italian, or German; certainly, no Earl's daughter could have fewer accomplishments. She could swim and

fence, and play cricket, and fire at a mark; but, of late, she had had no one to take part in these not very orthodox amusements for a young lady; and a sigh followed the mention of them.

As she went up-stairs at night, I saw her stand for a moment looking at the moon, which was shining over the trees on the opposite side of the road belonging to the Earl's park.

“Are those the cedars?” she asked me, pointing to where their lofty, spreading shadows blackened the grass, on which, elsewhere, the first white frost of the autumn was glimmering. “You shall take me to see them to-morrow, and I will tell you about Adolphus as we sit under them. It is not gloomy enough here.”

When I left her, my father asked me what the young lady had called me for; and I repeated her words. He thought it would do her good to speak of her brother, and that the effort to restrain the expression of her grief had been injurious to her. I scarcely knew how I had won her confidence, but it flattered me; and the pale, dark-browed, melancholy girl, filled with despairing grief for her sailor-brother, inspired me with the deepest sympathy.

I was up early the next day, but she

did not join me ; and when, after breakfast, I purposely waited to receive her commands and attend upon her, she seemed to have forgotten the wish she had expressed the night before.

My aunt, who had not heard what passed, was furious with me for idling about, and coming into the drawing-room every ten minutes ; and at length my patience was tired out. The capricious young lady sat listlessly at the window from which she could catch a glimpse of the cedars, till the transient autumnal sunshine left their broad tops, and clouds gathered overhead. When the day was so completely overcast that there seemed no chance of her wanting an escort, my father, who had been considerate enough to leave me unfettered, called me, and I was kept steadily employed till late in the afternoon.

CHAPTER VII.

I WENT out at the close of a busy day, to cool my impatience by a walk in the mist. The glades of the park were filled with white vapour, which curled up like smoke among the trees, and lay thick upon the grass. When I reached the wide space under the cedars, I found the Earl's drawing-room free from fog, and the bare ground beneath the boughs of the great trees was dry ; but every opening gave a view of the wreathing, eddying volumes now floating away before the rising wind, and then again rolling over more densely, and completely obscuring the prospect.

In opposition to the shadowy distance, the massive trunks and strong branches of the cedars were clearly defined, and stood out darkly and solemnly against the dim, grey, shifting curtain of the mist. There was no wind strong enough to stir their foliage ; the merest twig stood motionless ; and underneath them the rich brown hue of the soil was uni-

formly spread, like a costly but sombre carpet. I had been walking up and down for half an hour, chafing at the disappointment I had experienced in not showing these splendid trees in the beauty of the morning to Lady Honoria, when she suddenly came through the veil of shifting vapour outside the cedars, and joined me.

“I’d rather see them so than with the morning sunshine on their brows,” she said, looking upward. “They don’t like it more than I do, the grim giants! There’s mighty little pleasure to them in the sun-rays, that they would shut out if they could, and do, mostly, only now and then a stray one creeps in and gets lost among them. I could fancy them holding a court-martial, like those sea-tyrants, on some poor child that’s mad with their cruelty,” she half-whispered in an awe-struck tone, gazing at the frowning cedars, as if gifting them with human individuality. “There’s one, tall, straight, and stiff as the mast of some three-decker. That’s one of poor Adolphus’s judges! and here’s one that’s bent, but not yielding: it’s only his own crooked fancy he’s pursuing; not one of them dreaming of indulgence to the poor lad, whose brain is sometimes half-crazed with looking out to sea from the maintopmast, when the ship reels before the blast.”

“ Oh, you’re smiling !” she went on, suddenly glancing at one of the trees on which a gleam fell momentarily through the fog ; “ and there’s a bit of ivy has tried to wind itself round you : but it’s dying. You flattered him a little when your ship got the praise for sending its signals aloft fastest ; but there was no compassion in your hard heart the day the poor lad’s sight failed him, and the wind blew the flag away, and another frigate answered first. That’s what you never forgave him. ‘ Is it sleeping you are, young sir, to let others get the start of you ? ’ and not only such cruel words as those, but the blow that no gentleman could stand, and that broke the lad’s heart fairly.”

Her cheek reddened, and her small hands were clenched with rage, as, in her strongest Irish accent, she told me of the harsh treatment her favourite brother had met with. Doubtless, there was some exaggeration in her fanciful statement ; but I believe that, in the merciless rigour which the half-educated, ill-disciplined boy had experienced from his superiors, there was enough to excite a tamer spirit than his sister’s.

“ Don’t go to sea !” she continued, presently. “ You don’t know what tyrants some of those naval captains are. They are very well on shore. I have seen them sit at our

table, and heard them praise and flatter the poor boy they have helped to drown; but they are very different afloat. There is one I know of has the blackest heart, and never a word of kindness; and keeps the young lads in the ship till it seems like a prison; and oh! to gather a flower, or feel the land-breeze blow on them, would be their salvation! But he won't hear of it; and so they rebel, and go ashore without leave, and never come back!—that's the worst of it. How I wish I could believe we'll meet again in heaven!"

She fixed her dark, melancholy eyes upon the grey sky, just visible between the cedar-branches overhead, among which the evening wind, as it swept off the drops left by the wet fog upon the boughs, seemed to sound in our ears like the wail of the dying.

"Even when we are in most trouble," I said, trying to soothe her, "the thought of heaven should comfort us. Your brother was unkindly dealt with on earth; let us trust that, his faults forgiven by a more merciful Judge, he may be with both our mothers in paradise!"

"I'd like to see into it clearer," said Lady Honoria, her wonderfully expressive eyes seeming to grow larger as she gazed up at the sky. "It is very cloudy and troubled

up yonder; but if they get their children there with them, the mothers will warm them at their hearts. But, then, how will it be if we are so wicked?" she added, in a tone of anguish. "I am, I know—and Damian; and they tell me poor Adolphus deserved his fate. *She* said so. I wish her tongue was blistered, for the hard thought and the cruel heart that let her speak it!"

Her voice nearly broke down between choking tears and passion.

"She hates us all! There's not a crime she wouldn't commit to be freed from us, and have her petted darlings in my brothers' place!" she exclaimed, sobbing. "Adolphus is gone; and they've taken Damian away; and soon I'll be the last of them! She has stolen our father from us, and made our home so dreary, it passes me to live there! I'd rather be here, where my own mother died, though it's breaking my heart, I am, among strangers, than with her in a foreign country! I'm afraid of her! There's a cruel look in her eyes, and a hard touch of her hand, when she means to be caressing, that freezes my blood; and then I can't speak; and it lies like a load at my heart that she's killing my brothers, and that I can do nought to stay her!"

She flung herself on the brown earth, and

clung to the great cedar-trunk nearest to her, as if for protection. I was perplexed what to say to her, or how to comfort her; but I could not let the poor child believe herself forsaken by God and man; though I felt that on earth her destiny was a sad one.

As I talked to her, she grew surprisingly calm and gentle. The least kindness seemed new to her, and to produce an extraordinary effect. When I reminded her that her hair and dress were wet from the mist, and that my father and aunt would be uneasy at her staying out so late, she got up directly.

"Will any one care if it hurts me?" she said. "No one minded in Ireland. I'd be wandering about half the night at the old castle, and never missed. I suppose it may be different here."

We walked quietly back through the dripping wood-paths, reaching home before it grew quite dark, but not early enough to prevent alarm being felt respecting the delicate girl who had been confided to my father's charge.

He had gone out to look for her; and my aunt was bustling about, making all sorts of preparations to obviate the danger of her taking cold, scolding Lady Honoria's maid, and insisting, as soon as she saw her, upon her going to bed immediately. The hitherto

neglected child obeyed all her injunctions, with a sort of gratified wonder at being considered of so much importance ; and when I went along the road to meet my father, and tell him of her safety, I saw the red firelight shining out from her room with a warm, comfortable gleam, and figures moving about waiting upon her, behind the white window-blind.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN she came down, the following day, Lady Honoria sat in my mother's low chair in the recess between the fireplace and the window, watching the pine-trees swaying in the strong blast, and the rain dimpling the surface of the pools of water collected in the road.

My Aunt Margery, who bore her company, was accustomed to a stirring, industrious life. The sister with whom she usually resided was, from ill-health, dependent upon her, and required so much attention, that sometimes, during the whole morning, she told us she never sat still for ten minutes. One of poor Uncle Henry's daughters was at present with the invalid; and Aunt Margery, released from one affectionate servitude, was ready to adopt another, and not less onerous, set of duties among us.

It must have been a weary task for a woman of her active disposition to sit and watch the listless, melancholy girl, who, apparently, had never been taught to seek employ-

ment for herself. My aunt had almost finished the half dozen new shirts she had undertaken to make for my father, before, one morning, when I was sitting reading in the room, it occurred to the Earl's daughter to wish that she were not so idle and helpless.

"Indeed, my dear, I think it would be better for you," Aunt Margery said, cheerfully. "I suppose those long fingers of yours were given you to be of some use in the world; and you don't seem over-happy doing nothing from morning till night."

No more words passed at the moment; but, when I next saw Lady Honoria, she was at work,—not employed on any delicate embroidery, but slowly and with difficulty hemming a coarse towel or duster. Her thoughts seemed quite absorbed in her task, which she executed, I imagine, rather indifferently; but she went on trying to improve, and was evidently interested about her new occupation.

It amused me not a little, while they were at work together, to hear the questions she addressed to my aunt about her younger days, and the patience with which these were answered. There appeared to be no bounds to Lady Honoria's ignorance and desire for information. Sometimes, I wondered at her wishing to know so much of the habits and ways of a person so unlike her in character, and

so far removed from her in position ; at others, I was more surprised at the strong sense and graphic images conveyed in Aunt Margery's straightforward replies. Lady Honoria would grow quite eager, and the work always dropped from her hands when she became excited ; but Aunt Margery stitched away unweariedly, though now and then with the colour rising in her withered cheek.

"What makes you fond of this house, and why did you ever leave it, if you liked it so much ?" I heard the young lady say, one day. "My father doesn't care for Dunleary or The Cedars, but I'd rather stay there than go to Ems or Baden. You might have lived at home always, if you did not want to marry. I wonder why you'd leave your brothers."

"They left me, my love," said Aunt Margery, quietly. "At least, their hearts cleaved to others, and then we were better parted. Your father has many places much grander than this ; but I fancy people who rove from one to another, never love their homes as well as those who watch the trees bud and the flowers blow, and see the same old things about them year by year in one spot, from the time when they were born."

"And you really always lived here, and were quite satisfied ?" said Lady Honoria, looking down upon the quiet road, and then

round the room with wondering eyes. "You did not long to know what was beyond the trees and the river?—to go out into the world with your brothers? They would not always stay at home."

"We should have been very sorry to see them hanging about the place idle," replied my aunt. "Henry studied in Edinburgh. Robert went to London, and afterwards to sea. Ever since I can remember, there has always been one of the name practising at Moraston."

"Yes; you are proud of that, and you don't like idleness," said the young lady, taking up her work again. "Were you always busy?—I mean, when you were a girl? Were you as grave and steady then as you are now?"

My aunt smiled slightly. "Perhaps not quite. I had a good deal to sober me, even when I was young. Mary's health was feeble—our parents were old: there was always a charge upon me. In a medical man's family, when the round of practice is large, there is frequent occasion for self-denial, and often danger of infection, and wear and tear of health to encounter. We were brought up to it, just as a soldier's daughters learn their duty. We knew that the men of our house must be up late and early, toiling day and

night, doing battle with the enemy in the shape of fever and disease, and that it was our part, as far as we could, to aid them."

"Did you like it?" asked Lady Honoria. "I'd soon tire of the sick people, and of being so good. Why should you have had so much laid upon you?"

"It was God's will, my dear!" answered my aunt, solemnly. "Mine, after all, were light burthens; but I don't say my spirit did not sometimes rebel. We had been taught to do our duty, however, and we found a blessing in it. Mary bore her trials patiently, and does so still, and I took care of her and of our parents, till they gave me a much sorer grief by ceasing to trouble me. I never knew what real sorrow was before that time, and then it came upon me like a strong man armed, and took possession of my soul. Robert, who, I had foolishly made up my mind, would never marry, had been engaged for years, and brought these children's mother to live with us. Our other brother had married and died some time before. We were not happy after Robert's wife came, though she was a good creature; and the Almighty punished us for our discontent by giving us our way, and letting us set up our tent alone. My poor sister never got over the change, though she seemed to feel it at the time less than I did; but she has never had

strength to move about the little garden my brother took care to provide for her. If we had made light of smaller troubles, this great one of our own seeking might not have come upon us."

"But it was very provoking of your brother to marry. I must have hated his wife, if she were ever so good and pretty. Why should you go away to make room for her? It is the greatest shame I ever heard of," said Lady Honoria, her cheeks burning with indignation.

My aunt only laughed and shook her head in answer; but I thought, as I reflected upon what she had been saying, that there was much, even in the simple life of a village-doctor, of which his family might well be proud; nor less so of the many sacrifices by which women of principle, like Aunt Margery, and of tenderness, like my mother, lightened those arduous labours.

Lady Honoria remained silent, and her work advanced steadily, until my father came in to tea, and sat down, wearily, on the chair nearest to the table, while Aunt Margery prepared it for him. The young girl brought her the tea-caddy, and took my father's cup to him as soon as it was ready. A very few moments elapsed before he received a fresh summons, and he did not come back till after we

were all gone to our beds. It was so almost always. The day when he went over to fetch my aunt was the only holiday he had allowed himself for years.

This constant toil was nothing new to me. I had seen it going on ever since I could remember. When I heard my aunt talking, day by day, to the young, high-born lady, answering her questions, and ever and anon revealing, in a few strong words, the many painful sacrifices which virtuous women habitually make for the sake of their families, — those unregarded drops which in time form an ocean, — I began to think there was something grand in the simple, every-day life around me. Its commonest details were ennobled, its privations endeared, by the conviction how much good was effected by one man's strenuous performance of his allotted duty. It rested on my mind that none of all the generations of the St. Loes, with their ample means and hereditary influence, had done as much for the benefit of their neighbours as the humble medical practitioner, residing within a stone's throw of their park-gates, in the village-street of Moraston.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR upwards of an hour, every morning, while he waited for the rustic patients to whom he gave advice and drugs gratuitously, my father used to walk, after breakfast, up and down a small plot of grass beside our house, under the surgery-window. In my mother's lifetime, whatever employment might seem to claim her attention was never permitted to interfere with her practice of joining him; and, as long as I can remember anything, those two figures rise up before me, pacing the green with even steps, and talking earnestly to each other.

After her death he did not discontinue the custom, but we, his children, knew that we were not to interrupt him, and carried on our play elsewhere. Sometimes, an old dame from the village would drop her curtsy at the gate, and enter, knowing that the Doctor was sure to be at leisure at that time; or a neighbouring farmer or peasant would choose that opportunity for consulting him about one of

the many rural or domestic matters concerning which, as well as on medical subjects, they relied upon his giving them advice and assistance. Often he would stay out on the green most of the forenoon talking to his visitors, or in quiet meditation, till his gig came to the door, or the cares of business brought him within the house.

I do not know what could have put it into Lady Honoria St. Lo's head, soon after she came to us, to join him, as was her wont when he was alone, in this early morning walk; but he certainly did not dislike her company. His manner to her was always gentle, and I often watched them, wondering that they could find so much, in which both seemed to take interest, to say to each other. If I caught a word or two, through the open window, while I was busy in the surgery, the conversation was generally on the gravest themes; and yet the young girl would come in-doors afterwards with a serene, happy look in her face, which at other times its delicate features seldom wore.

There are the straggling rosebushes still, the slip of grass, and, next the road, the fence of shining holly. Through the small gate another set of patients come to consult their medical adviser at the same hour as formerly; but all that then lent beauty, in my

eyes, to the homely picture is gone. My father's countenance, with its strongly-marked lineaments, and that confirmed wrinkle of the brow which could never be quite unknit, softened for the time being with compassionate interest; and the girlish figure, light and agile, naturally, as the swift-footed deer in the neighbouring park, but, from ill-health, languid and bending; the small, proud head, with its golden hair, on which the morning sunshine fell, while through the loosely-falling rings the breezes played. There are no such figures in the foreground of my home-landscape now!

Aunt Margery, who was always peculiarly cross in the morning, like most very early risers, was shocked at the waste of time involved in this leisurely pacing of our grass-plot. It was a grievance of long standing. The turf, she truly averred, was quite worn by those constant footmarks, and she was certain it would do both my father and his invalid guest much more good to take a brisk constitutional walk, and get up the hill and on higher ground during this leisure hour. How Mrs. Frankland, with her delicate health, and a young family to attend to, had contrived to humour her husband in this strange whim, she could not say. The children's lessons and the household were always behindhand in con-

sequence ; but, summer or winter, she never gave it up.

Lady Honoria was as determined to persevere as my poor mother, till the last summer of her life, had shown herself ; neither did her bright eyes ever glance impatiently over the hedge, nor her small foot tire of those narrow precincts. God bless her for her patience, and for willingly cheering those hours of a toilsome life which we, none of us, did enough to lighten ! I believe that a blessing did descend upon her then, and that words of infinite importance were spoken during those morning walks. My father was a man of earnest piety, and he was not likely to lose the opportunity of imparting to that young, ignorant creature, the precepts by which he lived, and by whose guidance he was solemnly preparing himself, as the shadows of life crept on, to die.

The fine lady whom the Countess had sent to attend upon her step-daughter was not so patient as her mistress. Before she had been ten days in our house, she gave warning that she meant to leave it. The situation was not in the least what she had expected when engaged to wait upon an earl's daughter. Her references, which, she declared, were unexceptionable, were thrown away, and she could not forfeit caste by continuing to reside in the

family of a medical man, however respectable he might be, in a paltry country village.

My aunt, whom Lady Honoria, when she found into what a state of discontent her attendant had fallen, empowered to dismiss her, very gladly paid her the wages due, and took leave of her. Before she quitted the house, however, she managed to acquaint Aunt Margery and Dinah with various details respecting Lady St. Lo's treatment of her step-daughter, which filled her auditors with indignation.

With every allowance for vulgar prejudice, there was some ground for believing that part, at least, of her representation was true. Lady Honoria's horror at the mention of her step-mother was extreme, and invariably brought on a violent nervous attack. The neglect manifested towards her — for she received no letters from any of her relations — showed that she was in a manner abandoned by them. Her misery under her father's roof, owing to the Countess's tyranny, had, it appeared, excited the compassion of the household; and it was whispered among Lord St. Lo's servants that she had even attempted to put an end to her existence, rather than accompany the family abroad. The second family were all in all, and the offspring of Lord St. Lo's first marriage, it was believed, were stumbling-blocks in the Countess's way.

My father paid no attention to these questionable reports, but devoted his utmost care to promoting the recovery of his young charge. She gave very little trouble after her London maid quitted her, and was soon provided with a more useful attendant.

This west-country lass was of Lady Honoria's own choosing, and probably, on that account, a great favourite. During the autumn and early part of the winter, this young lady often accompanied my father on his drives to visit his more distant patients. I used rather to envy him, as he tucked the warm rug in round her, and made her draw up the little hood of her velvet cloak, to defend her from the keen blast, if she wanted to go with him among the hills. I knew that she was describing The Knowle one day, when she mentioned the orchard and the cut yew-trees belonging to a farm they had visited; and when my father came in he told us that a great change had taken place there since old Hezekiah Brand died, the previous October. His reprobate son had suddenly come back, and was likely, he feared, to cause the family a good deal of trouble. He had hung up his hat as master, and taken possession of the best room in his mother's house without asking permission; and, though the old dame was quite ill with fright, caused by his be-

haviour, and the first seeing him again after so many years of absence and misconduct, she did not think it in her heart a right thing, she said, to send him away.

Old Brand had made his will in a hurry at the last, and left everything of which he died possessed to his wife. His prodigal son could not touch a farthing, and she could dispose of the property as she liked; but she cried, and said it was too great a charge for a woman. She wished her husband had settled it for her rightly.

Lady Honoria, while waiting for my father, had conversed with the widow of the old farmer's younger son, and taken a great fancy to her daughter. These women were quite frightened at the rough ways of the man who had come home from sea, and now treated them as interlopers. They were sure he would try to turn the old mother's heart against them. His arrival had completely unsettled them, and the eldest daughter had been turning it over in her mind, that it would be best to strive to make herself independent by going out to service.

Her pretty, modest countenance, and the simplicity with which she told the young lady of their distress, touched Lady Honoria's girlish feelings. She asked Kate Brand, who was four years older than herself, if she would

like to come and live at our house, in place of the attendant who had just left her. My father's name was, as the widow knew, a security for kindness, and when he came downstairs, the agreement was easily ratified.

Lady Honoria was delighted with her new maid, who, on her part, adored her pretty young mistress. Kate talked to her about the pleasant ways of the farm on which she had been brought up, where she knew every cow and calf, and was astir with the dawn, milking the cattle and feeding the poultry. The young lady seemed very anxious to add the homely employments of churning, baking, and washing, in which Kate excelled, to the daily business of plain needle-work, wherein, under my aunt's instruction, she was making rapid progress. The Earl's daughter appeared to have much more inclination for household or rural labour than for courtly accomplishments.

Kate Brand's idea of making herself independent particularly interested her. "Why should we not all learn how to get our own living?" she asked. "Who knows what may fall out for any of us? I'd like to know how to clear-starch and manage a dairy: I will be making everything I wear presently. I hate to be a wicked, idle, fine lady!"

I am certain her mother-in-law was present to her mind; at that moment, for her

cheek flushed, and her speech failed her. She set to work in real earnest, with a child's impetuosity, but a woman's energy; persecuting Dinah to let her churn the butter and bake the cakes; and whatever useful task those fair hands applied themselves to was sure to be done well.

In fancy-work, or any ornamental kind of performance, on the contrary, she was certain to fail. Vainly my Aunt Margery tried sometimes to turn her attention to lady-like arts, as they were practised, probably, a good many years ago. Lady Honoria could make nothing of them. Her amusements had been shared with her brothers, and she used to watch us playing cricket and keep the score for us, though she considered herself too old, now, to join with boys in the game.

Her drives with my father were her greatest recreation; the business of the morning was to help Dinah and Aunt Margery, and learn some new branch of domestic duty. Gradually the deep sorrow under which she first came among us wore off; the rebellious spirit was subdued; and when, to my no slight regret, my father informed me that he had been disappointed in the expectation Lord St. Lo had led him to entertain, of obtaining a naval cadetship for me, and that I must leave home for a twelvemonth to study his own pro-

fession, I went from under his roof for the first time, bearing with me an ineffaceable impression of the beautiful, highborn creature who had conformed to the quiet usages of rural life so gracefully.

CHAPTER X.

THE year I spent in Edinburgh, emancipated from parental control, made a great difference in all my feelings. I left home a boy; when I came back to Moraston, I had learned to consider myself a man. All my early habits were changed. I had gone through an arduous course of study, with honour and credit; and my father, strict as he was in his requirements, was satisfied with the progress I had made.

Neither he nor my brothers were good correspondents. Almost everything that I knew about home affairs was imparted to me by Aunt Margery, and I read every part of her closely-written letters,—except, I am ashamed to say, the paragraphs containing good advice,—a hundred times over.

I knew from her how much uneasiness Lady Honoria St. Lo's delicate health had occasioned my father. His young guest had suffered from a severe return of her former nervous malady, during the spring following

her arrival, and for several months was unable to set her foot to the ground. At one time, it was apprehended that she might be deprived of the use of her limbs for life. I remember that, while this period of anxiety lasted, it seemed to me as if more than a twelvemonth elapsed between Aunt Margery's weekly letters, and that each successive interval grew longer than the last; but when I looked at the dates, which she never omitted to put at full length, I was forced to confess that her punctuality was unimpeachable.

In August, at my father's particular request, Lord St. Lo, being in London for a week or two on business, paid our house a hurried visit. He was not so much shocked as my aunt expected at his daughter's invalid state, but expressed a decided opinion that she could not be in better hands. Lady Honoria appeared to agree with him entirely, and such an aggravation of her nervous and hysteric symptoms had taken place, in consequence of my father's recommending her to accompany Lord St. Lo abroad, and try the effect of foreign baths, and change of air and scene, that he had been forced to give way. She had exerted herself surprisingly since the Earl's departure; and, perhaps, after the agitation of seeing him subsided, his visit acted as a salutary stimulus, for a steady improvement in

her health and strength went on during the autumn and winter.

Aunt Margery still continued to live with us, and latterly she had given up any mention of the necessity for her resuming the charge of her sister. On this point, I was more enlightened by one of my father's unfrequent letters. His brother Henry had left a widow and family, who lived in the same town with my aunts. Mary had taken a great liking to the girls, one or other of whom was always staying with her, since Margery, who did not agree so well with the widow, had been away. It ended in my father's asking his eldest sister to remain with us altogether, while Mrs. Henry Frankland and her daughters took up their abode with Aunt Mary.

By her not alluding to the subject, I could see that the change towards herself in her sister's feelings distressed my Aunt Margery not a little. Mary was not so constant in her affections, and enjoyed the alteration from their quiet, old-maidenly habits to the bustle of a house full of young people. We were most decidedly the gainers; and, after a short time, Aunt Margery must have felt happy in the conviction that we could not possibly have done without her. Uncle Henry had left his family extremely ill-provided for, and the arrangement my father made, when they agreed to take

charge of Aunt Mary, was a great accommodation to them. They gave up their ugly house in the street very joyfully, and soon bestowed a different aspect on the shady cottage and garden which Aunt Margery's taste had rendered one of the stiffest of suburban abodes. With the young people to encourage her to exertion, Aunt Mary contrived once more to move about, and lead a comparatively active life, when the eyes which for so many years had watched her anxiously could no longer be gladdened by the change.

Moraston, I firmly believe, never looked so beautiful as during the summer I spent there, when my Edinburgh studies and lectures were over. I had worked hard enough to enjoy my holiday, and my father probably saw at a glance that I needed rest, for he did not for some weeks urge upon me any fresh exertion. The downs were green after the spring-rains, or had whole fields of gorse and broom, in golden blossom, covering portions of their steep ascents. Not one of our roses was blighted, though in general the east wind cut them cruelly. The bushes were laden with flowers, and the side of the house starred with white jasmine. It struck me, the instant I came home, that the place looked different, the grass more neatly mown, the flowers better tended,—more worthy, in short, of being

the residence of the pretty creature whom I found blooming, like a delicate exotic, among us.

She was slighter and fairer, and looked, perhaps, younger than ever; but nevertheless, to me, in that long twelvemonth, she had grown into a woman. I felt strangely shy, and at first scarcely ventured to speak to her. Even her kindness did not reassure me. I was astonished at the behaviour of my father and aunt, and still more so at that of Edward. They treated her like a child or sister. To me she seemed one quite apart from, and immeasurably above, us.

Yet it was not long before the influence she had insensibly exercised upon all my family became to me very perceptible. The constant care she had required during illness, and the grateful affection with which she repaid it, had softened my father's manners. Aunt Margery had grown considerate, and Edward quieter and more gentlemanlike. Even the old house appeared to me lighter and pleasanter, with windows opened where, formerly, no one took the trouble to let in the air, and flowers in every direction. As I watched her moving about, ministering to my father's comfort, breathing over our dull home the essence of grace and beauty, I fancied my mother's spirit, in a yet lovelier form, revived; and

all the romance fostered in my character during the lonely hours when, in boyhood, I lay dreaming under the cedars, entered into and ennobled the worship I rendered up to the beautiful daughter of Lord St. Lo. The more simple she appeared to others—the more she tried to be the child of our house, rejoicing in returning health, because she might be actively useful—the greater was my reverence for her. I could not understand Edward's satisfying himself with carrying pails of water to the flower-garden, and leaving her to do the rest. Almost by force, I took the great can from those snow-white hands, and poured showers over the geraniums. Lady Honoria laughed, and said with the Irish accent I so well remembered:—

“Leave it alone, Charles! I'll do it better than you. See how you're spoiling the blossoms! Surely, you don't expect it's sitting on the grass I'd be, and you slaving for me, when you're just come home for a holiday? It's my work, and I like it; and if I can't do such things as these, I'm fit for nothing in this busy house; so you had best not vex me with tiring yourself, after your long, hot walk, but lie down there in the shade, and look at me.”

I did as she bade me, and lay on the grass watching her as she moved lightly and gracefully among her plants, flinging over them

sparkling showers, and singing snatches of wild Irish airs, that seemed to rise to her lips spontaneously.

It was easier for me, after my return home, to talk to Lady Honoria about my mother than upon any other subject. She could just remember her death, and often questioned me concerning her ; and I found that my father, who could scarcely ever bring himself to mention his dead wife to her children, sometimes spoke of her to the young creature who had won for herself a daughter's place in his heart. Mine often beat quickly, when our fair visitor spoke with girlish vivacity of the delight of sacrificing, as my mother had done, luxury and idle pomp for the sake of those she loved ; or wondered why such opposition should have been made by her relations to her marrying my father.

The romance of their union, vividly present to my recollection—my mother's extreme refinement of character, yet devotion to her rugged partner—were themes which, at that time, it greatly pleased me to dwell upon. Not that any definite meaning linked itself to these vague ideas ; but they lifted me out of the commonplace world wherein we lived. My father's patients, the dreary duties in the surgery, were kept in the background, while the clinging tenderness of the wife

and mother, of whom we had been deprived, threw a softening grace over the rude features of our toilsome mode of existence.

Lady Honoria had never quite overcome the terror inspired, since her brother's death, by the sight and sound of the sea. After her last illness, bathing had been recommended, and my father took infinite trouble to procure for her the necessary accommodation ; but the effect upon her shattered nerves of the first trial was so painful, that it was not considered advisable to expose her to it again. The first time she ventured upon the beach, after the removal of the machine—the sight of which terrified her—was after I came home. None of her requests were ever denied in our house. From my father to old Galpin, her will was law ; and I went with her, a few evenings following my arrival, to the top of the pebble-ridge, to see the sun sink below the waters of the West Bay.

It was a very calm summer evening, and the fine weather had been of long duration. There were no traces of recent storms or wrecks along the coast. One after another, the waves rippled gently over the shingles ; but still, while she leaned upon my arm, I felt my companion shiver as the bright silvery line crept almost to our feet. The ocean, however smiling might be its present aspect, was her

young brother's cruel, melancholy grave; more funereal than the churchyard, though it bore no mark upon its surface of the life which had been lost beneath it. The boy's bright hopes, her own bitter tears, were not registered upon that cold, clear mirror.

She did not speak of Adolphus, as we proceeded slowly onwards, though I knew that she must be thinking of him; but she asked me whether I recollected coming down to the beach with her, the morning after her arrival at Moraston, and trying to find the old seaman who had helped me to finish the little model of a frigate which I had given to her. She still had it in her possession; and, one day, when she was showing it to Kate Brand, the girl told her that the person who had disappeared so suddenly from the hut upon the shingles was her uncle. One of the fishermen who came to the farm with herrings had recognised Matthews, who did not dispute the question of his identity, though he gave the man who announced it a very unfriendly reception. During her grandfather's lifetime, Kate believed that his graceless son's living in the neighbourhood had not been suspected.

We were passing the mound of rubbish, for it was little else now, which had once served for a human creature's dwelling. After it was deserted the roof had fallen in, and

gradually most of the spars and timbers were carried away. Then the shifting sand and pebbles in winter choked up the place, whence the few articles of furniture it contained had been transported to other abodes near, almost as forlorn, belonging to the fishermen.

Lady Honoria told me that my father had not gone near the farm for many months, on account of his disliking the sailor so much for the vile language he used. He was always very violent about Dr. Frankland, Kate said, and abused him for having persuaded his father to make a will which cut him off from the property. Perhaps he might be more civil to me, and she longed to see her mother, and her little brothers and sisters. I found, in short, that it was a settled plan, with both mistress and maid, that, when I came home, I should take them to The Knowle farm.

There were very few places in the world to which, at that period of my life, I would not willingly have gone, if Lady Honoria had desired me to be her companion. I remember well how much we all three enjoyed the air upon the breezy hills, scented, as it was, with the rich perfume of the yellow furze. Kate walked beside her mistress's pony, while it was happiness enough for me to listen to her voice, to open gates and assist her to mount or light down from her saddle, when she pre-

ferred walking with her pretty handmaiden, and I led her little fairy-footed Ariel.

The Knowle was such a lonely spot, that the arrival of our small party created quite a sensation. I saw the grizzled head which had often bowed before the strong sea-blast beside me, looking over the yew hedge as we came up the pathway. The children were hiding behind the carved peacocks from their terrible uncle, and Kate's mother, the meekest creature in existence, was peeping over the blind; but the old dame came out fearlessly, all smiles and curtseys, at the front door, to welcome us.

She had recovered from her grief at being left a widow; and in spite of the constant whirlwind which Matthew's temper kept up in the domestic atmosphere, she was as good-humoured and hospitable as ever, taking it for granted, as she expressed it, that men must make themselves disagreeable, and that the least said was soonest mended.

I saw the little children scudding into the house under a torrent of abuse, and their mother consoling them, as I took Lady Honoria off the pony. Rather to my surprise, Matthew Brand, who had put his hat on, and his hands in his pockets, removed the covering from his head when he saw, as he explained to me afterwards, the real lady. He scowled fearfully

at Kate, who ran past him into the house to kiss her mother; but he spoke to me rather cordially.

“It’s one of his good days!” Dame Brand whispered. “He’ll not fly out so much before the lady; but, bless ye, don’t mind him! The children provoke him, but he doesn’t mean half he says.”

“What’s that about, missus?” inquired her hopeful son, facing round suddenly. “Talk of children, indeed! you’d better not!—a fine set of them you’ve reared up to plague us. The blacks were nothing to these little idle beggars, running wild in, and out, and over my flower-beds. What’s brought Miss Kate back, I wonder?—I thought she was too fine to stay at home. Just stop that kissing!”

He seemed to take some effectual measure to damp Kate’s joy, and that of her mother, at meeting; for though, after he strode into the parlour, we were only a minute or two in following him, the poor meek-hearted widow was crying.

“Avast, there! Mrs. Brand, let’s have no caterwauling! This mealy-mouthed young woman had best keep away, if all hands are to set to piping. Here’s a precious lot of simpletons I’ve got to manage, Master Charles! So you’ve not forgot the old boat and the duckings we got in her? I say, young fry!—look sharp—

be off—fly! Here's people come, and you all stand blubbering round that girl, and give them nothing to eat and drink; I don't know which is the greatest fool among you."

The children were scattered off, like leaves before the wind, at his angry objurgations; the old dame, his mother, going on all the while, behind his back, with a series of gestures and curtseys, which seemed intended to imply that we were not to be disconcerted, and to make up for her son's want of amenity.

"Here's a pretty state of things for a man that likes to see the decks swept clean, and all hands neat, taut, and trim!" he exclaimed, throwing the women's work off the table, and pulling the hair of a rather unkempt lad who was busy with his books at one corner. "This boy wants to be a scholar!—a gentleman, it will be next!—who knows but he won't turn out a parson? I don't so much mind if he's not a doctor. Your father has used me ill; I wish he'd just come over here and hear a bit of my mind! Here's this old woman, as stuck up as she can be!—keeps me under, sir, I can tell you! Flings it in my teeth that I've been a wanderer—I'm not sure that she don't say vagabond—and sets the bits of things yonder against me! That's my luck! Come home, after buffeting about the high seas forty years, and here's a pretty sort of welcome! Find

the old man has left a will—your father helped him, and a rascally thing it was!—passing me over, to make this old mother of mine captain of the ship; and a precious job she'll make of getting into port, if I don't lend a hand! Got a plaguy slippery crew—two widows, and a leaky old vessel—rats in the hold, and these little noxious varmint poking their heads out of every chink and cranny. I'm almost sick of it!”

He walked about the parlour fuming, but not offering to help, while his mother and sister-in-law busily employed themselves in spreading the table with all sorts of rural delicacies.

“Take it out—I won't have it here. Don't you see the young lady's tired and hot, and would like the table put under the trees? Pipe all hands up, and move it,” he said, savagely, when at last he saw what they were about. “She'll catch a fever, and we'll have the Doctor about our ears, if you keep her mewed up in the cabin. It's cheery up aloft in the fruit-garden; and if the little beggars haven't cleared the beds, there ought to be loads of strawberries. Hallo! there, Mr. Scholar, I'll shy that book at your head if you don't bestir yourself! Mr. Charles, it's not the first time you've lent a hand to help me.”

We pulled the great deal-table out into the orchard, where the trees cast a pleasant shade, and the children, who had been busy gathering, brought freshly-piled cabbage-leaves full of strawberries to add to our rural repast.

The seaman was quite courteous to Lady Honoria, picking out the best fruit, and helping her liberally. It was only when the meek woman, Kate's mother, or her children, came in his way, that he could not restrain his tongue.

"Those widows are so aggravating!" he said, eyeing her vindictively, as she sat talking, in a very subdued tone, to her daughter. "I'd just like to know what she's saying to the girl—what mischief she's putting into her head. I say, mother, just stop her tongue a bit, can't you? The young craft's getting into deep water—let's have a little plain sailing. Pitch that young rascal, Tommy, overboard, if he treads on the borders! I raked them over myself before breakfast, while you lazy ones were asleep. The lady's got nothing on her plate. You gather the gooseberries fast enough when I don't want you, and now, when we've got friends, and the sun's broiling worse than it did in the tropics, you let 'em starve. I'll be after you, you young good-for-nothings, and make you look about you!"

Master Tommy was half-way up an apple-

tree, the instant his uncle showed symptoms of moving. Lady Honoria's sweet accents delayed the outbreak. She asked her surly neighbour about the ships he had sailed in, and evinced so much interest in his answers, that she quite humanised the rough monster for the moment. Kate and her mother got through a great deal of confidential talk without rousing his indignation.

I heard her inquire, in faltering tones, when no one but myself was listening, after the bit of wood with the name of her brother's ship upon it, which we had picked up after the storm.

"God bless you, my sweet young lady! I wish I had it,"—the rude seaman said, more gently than I could have fancied his speaking,—“and the young life, too, that was cast away when that boat went to pieces;—I would help all a man could to save it. If I'd pulled an oar, then, it mightn't have happened; but there's no saying. I brought scarce anything from the old hut but the red jacket and trousers the young master knew me in; and those I burnt when I could provide myself with others. I'd overhaul my kit, if there was a chance of finding it; but I took it for nothing but a rotten old spar, and never thought that tears would be shed for it.”

He was silent for several minutes, and I saw that Lady Honoria was weeping over the disappointment, though it was only what we might have expected ; but, in early days like those, impossibilities appear practicable. He jumped up, crosser than ever, at last, and scolded poor Kate and her mother so fiercely that they quite trembled, and the children skulked away like timid hares before the blasts of his displeasure.

They were a bad lot, all of them, he said. He wished Doctor Frankland no worse luck than to have such a slippery jade as Miss Kate under his roof. She was not to look to him for a character, if she lost the one she took out with her. As for her mother, like all widows, she was as artful as could be, and the children were just running the same bad road as their elders. He wished he was back in the old hut on the beach, with a good store of winter firewood, and nothing worse to do than to keep a sharp look-out for squalls in the offing.

We left him storming away, with his hands behind him, in front of The Knowle ; Dame Brand smiling, in imperturbable good humour ; Kate's soft-hearted mother dissolved in tears ; and the poor children frightened half out of their senses.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR vigilant coast-guard officer, Lieutenant Salcombe, told us that his men had never had such hard duty as during the winter which Matthew Brand had spent at The Knowle. The out-houses and barns, some of which stood in remote spots among the hills, where the widow's sheep found pasturage, were said to have been converted into receptacles for smuggled goods; and in spite of the pretence which the *ci-devant* seaman made of being a stranger, and one who kept aloof from the community, the Lieutenant had an idea that the farm-horses and carts were always ready for use whenever a contraband cargo was landed. Information had been given that a number of suspicious-looking kegs had been seen lying in the orchard, and he was determined that neither the highly-respectable character of the dame and of her late husband, nor the dread commonly entertained of the extremely violent temper of the son, who now managed her affairs, should prevent his paying them a visit.

The trade, which had languished since the establishment of the new station at Moraston, was now greatly on the increase, and several profitable runs had been made. More capital was reported to be invested in it, and the closest watch was necessary all along the coast to stop the only flourishing traffic in which our west-country lads embarked. From father to son, it was handed down amongst them, that the best investment going was a share in a contraband cargo, or the gain won at the cost of personal hazard by assisting in a smuggling venture.

Mrs. Brand had received the officer with the greatest civility when, a few evenings previous to the one he was spending with us, he had bearded the lion in his den, and told her, while Matthew growled and fumed in the chimney-corner, that he found himself under the unpleasant necessity of overlooking her premises. The old dame seemed to consider it rather a good joke, and laughed and curtsied while she proffered him every assistance in the examination, which proved to be totally unsuccessful.

The only suspicious circumstance about the place was there not being a single horse in the farm-stables two hours after sunset. Mrs. Brand was evidently surprised, when told of this by Lieutenant Salcombe, and

her fluency of speech sustained some check in consequence. When his mother was for once silent, Matthew gave expression to his displeasure, saying that she was an old goose, and had forgotten that the team always started over-night when there was a heavy load to take in to market.

The officer was forced to withdraw after his fruitless search, under a torrent of abuse from the son, and profuse civilities and offers of refreshment from the mother. Nevertheless, evidence very little short of positive proof was advanced the next day, that the strong draught-horses, on whose girth and breed old Hezekiah prided himself, had helped to convey, a dozen miles up the country, a quantity of spirits and tobacco which had paid no tribute to the revenue.

Our good friend, Salcombe, was, in his own way, quite as impetuous as Matthew Brand, and had more than once injured his prospects by too great independence of spirit. Though a capital officer, and always approximating towards perfection in the order and discipline maintained under his rule, he was, unfortunately, never long enough in the same place to carry out to any useful end the admirable plans which he was constantly forming. He had been stationed for some time in the north of Ireland, before his removal to this

western district of England, and had been sent from pillar to post—from the *Ultima Thule* of banishment, Connemara and Antrim, to the Scilly Isles, the Cinque Ports, and half a dozen other distant localities, in consequence of his not being able to chime in with the different arbitrary humours of the Inspecting Commanders of the districts to which he was appointed.

Perhaps he might partly be in fault. I only heard his version of these stories; and in telling them, he had a way of branching off from the point in question, which made it rather difficult to ascertain the real merits of the case; but I am sure he was a warm-hearted, honourable man, possessed with a most earnest desire to forward the interests of the hard service in which he was engaged, and as much disposed to resent the injuries of the meanest and most helpless of his fellow-creatures as his own.

He never looked at Lady Honoria, while she was our guest, without my seeing in his honest, handsome face, the indignation which, when she was not present, he very plainly expressed against her father. Lord St. Lo's estates in Ulster, he said, were, from their owner's neglect, in a very different condition from those of any neighbouring proprietor, and

the peculiar wretchedness of the tenants had weighed painfully on a heart as benevolent as was ever lodged in a man's breast.

“Upon my soul, sir, I doubt whether his children were much better cared for!” he remarked. “They were left month after month, with a crew of rascally servants, at the old sea-washed castle on the cliff, running wild like the rabbits. I was not surprised to hear that one of the youngsters, when subjected to the discipline of a king's ship, as it was enforced by one of the severest captains in the service, got into a sad scrape, and perished in an act of disobedience. Poor lad! no one ever taught him his duty to God or man, till it was laid upon him in the heaviest form it well can wear. I don't hope much better things for the rest of that noble family. The estate is a very hot-bed of Irish misrule and oppression—rackrented, mortgaged—not a soul but the Earl's steward and agent prospering. If there were to come a scarcity, a blight in the potatoes, or any accidental calamity, pestilence must ensue; the people would starve by hundreds. Such a property is enough to bring a curse upon its negligent possessor. I should like to see him stand up before me, and tell me that it is a state of things for which he is not responsible!”

Our fiery lieutenant looked about him fiercely, as if longing to inflict immediate punishment upon the defaulter; but, as no one present was inclined to take up the cause of Lord St. Lo, he went on more quietly.

“I heard of him wasting his money, leading a gay life on the Continent, while all this misery was going on within my beat; and, upon my word—it was not the wisest thing in the world—but I could not help writing to him. As a man, a father, and a landlord, he received such an appeal from me as I thought must stir his conscience; and he answered me very like a gentleman, I must say. He did not neglect my letter, though I was nothing but a half-pay lieutenant in His Majesty’s navy, at present serving in the Coast-guard. The Earl wrote plausibly, very fairly, about the evils I spoke of; no one regretted them more than himself; but the root of the mischief was deep-seated, farther below the surface than he or I could reach. He was very sorry for me, as a man of feeling, witnessing distress which I could not alleviate. In fact, Irish misgovernment was such a hydra-headed monster, that there was no encountering it, and he frankly owned that he shrank from facing the grievances which my eloquent letter described so well as exist-

ing among his people. He thanked me for mentioning that I did not think his poor children were in proper hands, and ended with warm professions of regard and obligation, but not a word of amending what he knew to be amiss. I dare say he shed tears over it. If he had been one of our men, I vow I would have stopped his pay, and made him take care of his children; but who can touch a peer of the realm? I should not wonder if they went barefoot on the stones. That girl looks as wild as she is pretty. She has been shockingly neglected; and so, they say, is the young Lord Dunleary, her brother,—he that will have the property some day, if he lives, and is learning to spend and mismanage it long before he gets it.”

I could have wished at that time, with all my heart, that Lord St. Lo had continued to be as neglectful a parent as our honest friend believed him. It was a blow to us all, when an imperative summons came for Lady Honoria to return to her family. Her father had been ill, and, though much recovered, still expressed a wish to see her. It was, fortunately, the healthiest season of the year at Moraston, and there were no serious cases on hand. My father put aside all minor considerations, and accompanied his young charge to the German watering-place where

the Earl and Countess were at present residing. Though I was fully occupied during his absence, and Aunt Margery treated me with more respect than formerly, and tried to make me comfortable, the month that followed their departure was the most dreary period of my life.

When he came back, I thought him singularly uncommunicative. There must have been so much to tell that we should like to hear, so many traits worth describing connected with the gay foreign society of which he had had a glimpse, that I could not forgive him for persisting in his habitual silence and reserve. It never struck me before that his nature was so unsympathetic; and yet I am certain that he was feeling very keenly for the beautiful creature of whom we could persuade him to tell us so little. I do not think that he at all liked the aspect of the home in which he had left her, or the circle in which her parents moved. There was much, doubtless, that offended against his austere, puritanical turn of mind, in those half-ruined, gambling, expatriated English, and their dissipated foreign associates.

I received rather more information on these points from Dame Brand and her widowed daughter-in-law, one day when I called upon them at The Knowle. Matthew was from

home ; and the two women were delighted at having the opportunity of showing me, without being disturbed by his fierce comments, a long letter which her mother had received from Kate.

The girl wrote with natural, unaffected good feeling concerning the grief occasioned to her by being separated from her family ; and complained that she was at times very forlorn. Her young mistress showed her great kindness ; but the Countess was displeased at her coming, and expressed surprise that Mr. Frankland should have made choice of one so inexperienced to be her daughter's attendant. Kate believed that she would have been sent back with the Doctor ; but Lady Honoria had appealed to the Earl, and, after a struggle, the point was conceded. The girl would have been glad to come home, except for Uncle Matthew being sure to take it in such a disagreeable way, and declare that she was sent off for light conduct. She did not like, either, to leave her young lady, who was very melancholy sometimes, and had scarcely any pleasure among her grand relations. Kate thought that Lady Honoria often wished herself back at Moraston.

I read this sentence more than once, as I held the letter in my hand, wondering whether Kate Brand's impression was a correct one.

I had worked myself up latterly into the belief that Lady Honoria wished to go away, and that in her own sphere, under her father's roof, she must be happier than she could be with us. I ought to have been sorry that her home was not a pleasant one; but I confess I was selfish enough to be glad that she regretted having left us.

Kate's letter went on to mention that the young Lord had lately come over from Ireland, and that she thought him one of the best of the family. He did not speak any foreign language, and liked to talk and laugh with his sister, or even sometimes with herself: indeed, but for him and Lady Honoria, Kate said she should almost forget her English, for the Countess and the little children spoke nothing but German and French. All the servants were foreigners and Roman Catholics; but there was a little chapel belonging to the Embassy, with a burial-ground for strangers and heretics, as they called her, which had fir-trees growing in it, and seemed more like home, with the English names on the tombstones, than anything else about her.

Lady Honoria went to the Protestant Chapel, and the young Lord had gone once or twice, but he was not very attentive to the service. Kate tried to keep her mind steady, and read her Bible on Sundays; but it was a

hard matter, when everybody in the house treated the day as one meant for recreation. There was dancing under the trees, and card-playing going on in the saloon, among people who ought to know better ; but her mother might rest sure that she would never join in anything so wicked.

Above all things, Kate requested that Uncle Matthew might not be permitted to read her letters, or to hear a word of their contents. She might, perhaps, have to ask her mother and grandmother for advice under circumstances which she should not like him even to guess at, any more than to imagine what bad words he would use about her and those with whom she was living.

Kate's mother related to me, with her usual accompaniment of tears, the failure of her attempts to comply with this injunction. Matthew had, indeed, respected Kate's little seal, and did not open the letter when he brought it from the post-office. He gave it to her mother, saying that he knew it was full of nonsense and things which she ought not to have written. Both the women, however, thought that he was angry at its not being shown to him.

He had been so cross all day they could scarcely stay in-doors with him and listen to all the cruel remarks he made about Kate ;

saying that she had changed her religion, or was otherwise misconducting herself in a manner which they were ashamed to let him know. This, of course, was indignantly denied ; but when, on further provocation, the poor girl's innocent letter was given to him to read, he crumpled it up in his hand, vowing that he had no time nor heart for reading such stuff, and should throw it into the next fire he came near.

The following morning, nevertheless, when Kate's mother was crying as she dusted the mantel-shelf, she saw something like the letter, for the loss of which she was grieving, stuck behind the looking-glass ; and pulling it out carefully, recognised with joy Kate's precious communication from foreign parts. The grandmother nodded and laughed, as she observed, " Matthew must have read it, too, by his jokes." Kate's mother coloured up till the tears came into her eyes, at this allusion to the ungentle criticisms, doubtless, of her brother-in-law ; but the recovery of the letter consoled her. I, too, was glad that it had come safely out of such rough hands, for it contained a great deal which I was well pleased to have seen, and on which I pondered during that sultry autumnal afternoon, while I was fishing in the deep stream that traversed Lord St. Lo's park.

The cool, grey sky was visible only at

intervals through the boughs of the trees, which rested motionless, stirred by no wandering breezes, their weight of foliage bending them low, till they touched in many places the surface of the water; a tinge of gold and crimson lighting up the shadowy place with a gleam like sunshine, and bright starry twinkling lights breaking out in the brook, amidst the very darkest hollows, as the flies darted over it, or some ripple in the under-current broke its stillness. Wherever the trees opened, long vistas of misty woodland seemed to stretch away into interminable distance. The cooing of the pigeons, the rustling of the squirrels, feeding upon the hazel-nuts, and the tap of the woodpecker, with now and then the shrill cry of the jay, made music in those extensive, quiet groves.

I had almost forgotten the sport I was pursuing when Duncan Geddes, the Earl's Scotch keeper, came up, and asked whether I had got my basket full, as it was a capital evening for fly-fishing. He was a more skilful angler than myself, and had taught me many a useful lesson. The fact was, the man had that strong, practical turn of mind, quick eye, and observant spirit, which, whether applied to small or great things, always give him who possesses these rare endowments power among his compeers, and generally raise him above

them. At the death of the old head-keeper, such a recommendation was forwarded to the Earl, that he gave his place to the Highlander, and he now resided at the Forester's Lodge, instead of occupying his wild hut on the edge of the common.

I had not seen him since this change took place in his position, and heartily congratulated him upon it.

"It's just the Lord's will, Master Charles," he said, "and I thank Him for it; but it's not the place he has to live in that makes a man happy. The old hut was gude enough for a lone fellow like me, and I think they should have chosen a man with a handful of bairns to run about in the Forester's Lodge. Why, if it was in the power of the pleasant places of this world to make us happy, where would the master of this noble park be but at his own fine house in the centre of it? But you see here stand the trees and the Hall for our enjoyment more than his that owns them, and never sees the golden glory of the sunshine on the tops of his own woods, or the play of the stream as it gushes through them."

He landed a splendid trout on the bank as he spoke, and proceeded to hook on a fresh bait and cast my line, which he had taken up from the water, in a cool, deep hollow, where it was sure to prove attractive.

“You are a keener fisherman than I am, Duncan,” I said; “I don’t think I care much for so tame a sport. It was more to take a parting look at the woods and waters that I came here. Do you know that I leave home and am going to sea the day after to-morrow? I shall like seeing the world better than fishing.”

Duncan’s usually calm, grave features worked with some hidden emotion, which I did not comprehend. Presently he said,—

“God guide ye, my laddie, in a’ the airts o’ this evil world that He, in His mysterious ordinances, wills that ye shall be led into! I shall pray for you night and morning, and the sairer the temptation, the mair may ye be able to win through it honourably and safely!”

I was not prepared for the solemnity of this address, and it set me thinking, as his words had often done before. Meanwhile, Duncan Geddes sat with his keen eyes watching the stream, yet busy with his own thoughts, and not heeding the fish that leaped up at the bait.

“Many a one have I seen leave their hames,” he said, after some minutes, “that never came back, or returned so changed, that those who loved them best scarce knew their own again. Girls with the light of innocent

love in their eyes, and frank-heartedness on their lips, and men who walked honestly before their Maker, till they came in contact with sin and folly, and turned out of the right path into one that promised better, but led to ruin. I'm not thinking 'twill be so with you, young master. You've heard the truth, and now the time's come to practise the lessons you've been all your young life learning. It's best for you to go, but I will never pass through the woods without missing you."

I was touched by his earnestness, and told him more about my future prospects, to which he listened with interest. I was to sail as assistant-surgeon, in a ship whose captain was the son of an old friend of my father; and since I could not, with due obedience to my parent's wishes, carry out my boyish intention of being a sailor, the career he had chosen for me was the next best thing, for one who loved the ocean so intensely.

"Go where you will, it cannot harm ye to have done the will of him that is your earthly parent. May your Heavenly Father protect you!" said the Highlander, gravely. "I'm not of your way of thinking about the sea, but He is to be found there, as well as on the lone hills of my ain country, where I have sought Him; aye, and in these green woods, that seemed strange at first, but now have a home-look about them. Will you come along

with me, Master Charles—it's not far round—and see my place? I'd like to show it you before you leave us."

The Forester's Lodge was a commodious dwelling, set deep in the thicket, but with a clearing just about it, which the Scotchman was making as neat as possible. There were bright hues on the Virginia creeper that mantled the walls, and the myrtles, which grew within the damp, sheltered, woodland garden, were starred with blossoms. Strong twisted boughs of knotted oak shaded the windows, and over the rustic porch twined roses and honeysuckle. A warm gleam shone from the fire within, just kindled by a country lassie, whose hair was snooded after the Scottish fashion. She was his niece, the keeper said; and as he had room for her, and she was an orphan, he had sent for her lately to keep his house.

He sighed as he spoke, and showed me the conveniences of his dwelling; and a rumour I had heard, that the strict, stern Presbyterian was a lover of the beautiful girl, Kate Brand, who had accompanied Lady Honoria St. Lo abroad, came to my recollection. When his niece had left the room, and we sat down by the blazing hearth, I asked him why he had not married when he obtained his present excellent situation.

"Did I not try to keep her?" he said, all

the energy of his character suddenly bursting forth ; “ but, man or maid, the wilful maun have their way, and hers was to go where the word of God is thought of but lightly, and the purest-minded women are sair apt to be misguided.”

He pushed one of the burning logs vehemently with his foot into the red embers, and as the flame burnt up brightly, I saw the dark, strongly-marked lineaments of his face flushed with passionate grief.

“ Oh, Master Charles, there’s trials for us all, but the hardest are those that come from the heart ! There’s but one woman on earth I’d care to have beside me. I’d have made her happy, too, but she did not think so. She was angered with her uncle, the daft old man at The Knowle, and too proud of her ain beauty to bury herself, as she called it, here, in these lonesome woods. Often she has crossed them, weeping ; that saddened them, for it’s cheerful enough with the merry sunbeams creeping in and out among the leaves, and the birds singing. A winsome, light-hearted creature ; fitter for the sunshine and fair weather than to bide the storm and bear the crazy flights of that wicked old sinner’s crooked temper ! ”

I felt for him deeply, as, with his features clouded, and his eyes fixed upon the fire, he

pondered over his disappointment. It was true that to me, as it had, probably, appeared to the young girl, the man's grave and solid character seemed ill adapted to match with her livelier disposition. But love is still love, light where it may; and dissimilar as Kate Brand and Duncan Geddes might be, its genuine spirit shone in the clear blue eye, and burned in the manly, glowing cheek of the Scotchman. Well would it have been if the frail plant had sought support from that strong, sturdy stem. In a very little while, it might be, her influence would have softened what was harsh in his nature, and his firm principles and steadfast affection must have repaid her. But it was not so ordained, and the keeper's lodge was warmed only by the kindly charity which had made him send for the poor orphan from her desolate mountain-home to share its shelter. Yet kindred love and duty, what were they to the hope which had been momentarily kindled in a breast long inured to discipline and self-denial, of the bringing home to dwell with him in the green-wood so bright a creature as the young beauty from The Knowle?

CHAPTER XII.

I PURPOSELY hurry over the events of the next six years, which were passed principally afloat, and gave me experience, after my dreaming boyhood, of the real hardships of life. The career of a naval surgeon, even up to the present time, has always afforded, at its outset, much that must be humiliating to the feelings of a gentleman; and in the rude west-country home which had hitherto been mine, though we were unaccustomed to luxuries, our sense of propriety had not been blunted. Placed below boys whose beards had not grown, — degraded from the society of officers who, in point of education, were, many of them, far beneath me, — I was, in most of the ships I sailed in, a solitary individual; and I sometimes envied the wild glee of the young midshipmen, which banished for the moment the recollection of any evils — and they were, then, not trifling ones — of which they had to complain; or the rough fare and equal measure dealt to the common seamen. They, at

all events, messed together, were treated alike, and lay down in their hammocks, rocked by the waves, without the sorely-wounded pride which, while it made me wretched by day, often robbed the night of needful rest.

Home feelings overpowered me when I found myself, one bright summer evening, sailing past the white limestone cliffs of Antrim, which brought to my mind the heights of Freshwater and the tall pillars of Beer, the last of the chalk range of Dorset. The front presented by the land to the North Sea, which was spread out before us, with the Scottish coast and the Mull of Cantire faintly looming in the distance, was very bold and remarkable, intersected with chasms, down which trickled streams of water, and capped with pillars of basalt. A small town, backed by precipitous mountains, lay, with its white walls gleaming in sunshine, at the entrance of a dark-wooded glen, with naked rocks starting up from it, which stretched on the right to a promontory jutting out into the sea, crowned by the towers of a castle. This steep cliff was as white as snow, and between it and the land was a narrow but deep chasm, spanned by a bridge. We could see, from the deck of the vessel, a cavalcade of persons on horseback crossing it, looking more like birds than human beings, so lightly was it poised in air. They

seemed to hurry over ; and probably it was, as the pilot told me, the safest way. If people loitered or stood still, the fragile structure swayed backwards and forwards, and the odds were that the luckless passenger met with a dangerous fall. It required a steady brain to cross the swinging bridge between Dunleary and the main land.

Sloping away to the very edge of the water, a gigantic mole or quay became apparent as we neared the coast ; its close-set ranges of columns fitted together as if by art, in a way which the skill of man has never surpassed. On the surface of that Titanic platform we could see a fresh spring gushing out ; but the water had not worn an inch off the stone, hard as iron, of which those visionary giants had wrought their mighty causeway ; neither had the sea marred their work by creeping into the interstices of that irregular but solid pavement.

As we sailed on past the white Castle Island, and anchored in the bay, the wharves and quay that ran out into the water were thronged with human beings. Well did every soul on board our vessel know the meaning of that eager crowd. Before we were near enough to see their faces, each man among us, by his own pained heart, could guess what was written upon them. In their gaunt lines were

engraven famine, disease, misery, hopeless until now, for the tidings that the Retribution brought relief to those perishing creatures had only just been spread among them.

The present season was one of sore calamity in Ireland. The food of the peasantry had, by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, been cut off. By the road-side, in fireless hovels, people were dying by hundreds; a terrible dearth in the land had been followed by pestilence; and, unless England had put forth a mighty arm to relieve her, Ireland must indeed have perished from among the nations.

Thank God! though somewhat tardy, our Government was not cruel. Relief to those starving multitudes was liberally administered. Ours was not the only one of the Queen's ships employed in this service, and many vessels were chartered and sent to the different ports, laden with provisions and necessaries of all descriptions.

Medicine was not less required than food, for the cholera was raging there. It was nearly a fortnight before I was able to take off my clothes, or snatch more than half an hour's sleep, dressed and ready for an immediate summons. In the dim alleys of that rocky town, more especially in the seamen's quarter, beneath the precipitous cliffs, disease was rife.

I think the supply of provisions, systematically given out by the captain and his officers, did much to check it; but the popular impression, amounting to a superstitious belief, was, that when the white sails of the frigate were first reflected in the bay, the number of cases lessened. The ardent Irish peasantry would come on board and kiss the masts, or kneel upon the deck, invoking, heretics as we were, blessings upon us. It was, indeed, time that the sword of the destroying angel, extended over their homes, should be stayed.

As the panic decreased, we met with much hospitality. The officers of the ship, excepting at the hours required by duty, were seldom on board. The distinctions observed afloat ceased when we landed, and I, too, received my full share of attention. Truly, there were grateful hearts, for the moment at least, in that wild corner of Erin, and the English strangers were enthusiastically welcomed.

Very unexpectedly, I lighted upon a friendly face one evening, when, not having so much work now upon my hands, I was taking an idle stroll through the town. The revenue cruiser, Shamrock, was in the bay, and I stopped for a moment, with the curiosity of a stranger, to see her officer land at the quay and come on shore for the night. I recognised with pleasure my old acquaintance, Salcombe.

“Ha!” he said, joyfully, “is that you, Charley, my boy? Never was better pleased in my life! Come to my quarters at once! I’m a married man now, you know, and must have somewhere to put up. Mrs. Salcombe is not over-fond of the smell of salt water.”

He gave directions rapidly to his men, and piloted me to a tiny cottage on the outskirts of the town and near the quay, but not commanding a view of the sea, where the lady whom he had married, after a long engagement, subsequently to his removal from Moraston, was awaiting his return to tea.

Mrs. Salcombe was a delicate, ladylike-looking woman, and must have been exceedingly pretty before she lost her health, as, her husband told me, had unluckily been the case since they married. Terror and sea-sickness during a stormy night, two years ago, when she accompanied him in the cutter to Ireland, had given her a shock which she had never entirely got over. They had been on two or three different stations, but none of them exactly agreed with her. He was afraid sea-air did not suit her constitution, in which case the evil was beyond a remedy, since his wife, if she could not come on board the cutter, must reside upon the coast, if she wished to see anything of him.

I was sorry for the fragile-looking creature transplanted from a quiet vicarage in Warwick-

shire to follow her husband's wandering footsteps. She was evidently very fond of him, and had gone through a world of hardships to maintain her constancy to my resolute friend. Salcombe was not a man easily daunted, and had carried his point at last, and overcome every obstacle, rational or irrational, in the way of their union.

"Better, to-night, Fanny?" he said; entering the frail abode with so quick and firm a step that the thin boards creaked beneath it, while the muslin curtains his wife had put up flew about wildly in the draught. "How's baby? I've brought a friend to see you both, who will tell you how to get well faster than I can. Charles Frankland, the son of my old friend at Moraston, and the young ship-doctor of whom you were telling me such wonders."

Mrs. Salcombe's pale face brightened with pleasure, and I thought her pretty as she held her hand out to me.

"I am glad to see you," she said, kindly. "The people here frighten me with their wild ways, and I cannot understand much of what they say; but I did hear them blessing the ship and the officers, and I am so thankful the cholera is stayed at last, without coming to our house. Was it really your prescriptions, or a charm you brought, as these ignorant Irish believe, that stopped the cruel ravages

the disease has been making among us this summer?"

"We brought a shipload of provisions, and the tidings that further supplies were on the way," I said. "That did more good than my medicine chest, which however, I trust, has been useful. I do not wonder that you have been unwell, in this tainted atmosphere, witnessing so much suffering. Now that it is in part relieved, you will recover."

"I am afraid I shall never be well by the sea," she said, disconsolately. "I am sure you must think Harry very silly for marrying me, but it cannot be helped now. I shall never make him a sensible wife, and he is much too good for me. This house, small as it is, is higher-rented than any in the town; but he took it for me because it is almost the only one that does not face the water."

I thought of the cheerful prospect which many even of the mean dwellings in the street afforded, and pitied the poor nervous woman who shuddered at the thought of ocean. If ever a man had sailor written on his broad, open brow, it was Harry Salcombe. What could make her fancy him? At night, she could not close her eyes, she declared, if she heard the waves. She slept in the worst room of their tiny dwelling, buried among walls; and my friend offered me, with something of a

sigh, the more comfortable dormitory, which, over the tops of chimneys and buildings, had a distant view of the sea.

They would not hear of my leaving them that night, and Mrs. Salcombe, with more alacrity than I expected from her, retired to give directions to her maid about accommodating me. While she was gone, Salcombe narrated to me the circumstances which had led to his quitting Moraston.

It was the old story over again. A pragmatic, overbearing commanding officer; and, on the part of my friend, a great deal of honourable feeling and gentlemanly instinct wasted. My father, he said, had taken his part warmly, but the matter had gone too far to be set right, so as to admit of his continuing to serve under the same immediate superior. I thought so, too, when I heard that he had collared the inspecting captain of the district; though the provocation had been such, that on strict inquiry being made, the conduct of the tyrannical commandant was severely blamed. Salcombe, however, was the greatest sufferer. He was ordered, at his own expense, and without being allowed the accommodation of a cutter, to remove to the coast of Sussex; and, after a very short stay there, upon his venturing to make a representation to the chief authorities, respecting the incon-

venience of the buildings at the station, he was hastily banished as a refractory subject, for the second time, to the coast of the North Sea.

It was some compensation that friendly interest in a short time obtained for him the command of a cutter; and he dearly loved the sea; but, in the end, even this turned out unfortunately. Fanny's father, the old vicar, who had so pertinaciously opposed their union, died suddenly, leaving his family without a home, and totally unprovided for. Of course, Salcombe's next step was to get leave of absence, spend half his yearly pay in the long journey, and bring back a portionless bride to help him to dispose of the remainder of his income.

Fanny was quite a lady, as he said, and my own eyes sadly convinced me; and, poor thing! she had been accustomed to a very different way of living. He was afraid she felt the change, and there was nothing to amuse her. He had brought a parrot home from the West Indies, which used to be quite a companion to him in his bachelor days, and he gave it to his wife; but Fanny was afraid of the bird, and disliked the noise it made so much, that it was impossible to keep it in the same room with her. Latterly it had lived in his cabin, on board the cutter, where all the sailors made

friends with it. He wished it might not learn bad language, before baby was old enough to understand it.

Salcombe sighed heavily as he looked round his wife's dull, expensive, prospectless lodgings. Poor fellow ! I dare say his cabin, with the pretty, talking, companionable bird, was much the most lively. I remembered his heedless, bachelor ways at Moraston, the hospitable little suppers he gave me at the buildings, when I walked back over the cliff with him after his nightly rounds, and his frequent visits to my father's ; and doubted whether the married life, to which he then looked eagerly forward, had quite answered his expectations.

It often surprised me to see how, in this man, the natural impetuosity of his disposition had never been, and seemed never likely to be, overcome. Salcombe had had more than most men to keep down his spirit, but the moment a spark fell upon the tow it kindled into a blaze. The strong discipline of the naval service, the tyranny of the local commanders, the arbitrary regulations of the coast-guard duty, had been bridling him in for years and years ; and yet he was just as ready now as when he ran away from school in boyhood, to throw up the irksome task of pleasing his superiors. Nevertheless, he was a great stick-

ler for the strict observance of rule and order, as well as, in theory, a respecter of authority. He marched into church, at Moraston, with his hat off, and his head thrown back, punctually to a minute; and even the severest fit of rheumatism, such as in our damp fogs often assailed him, never interfered with his bending the knee, or standing erect, as enjoined by the rubric.

My father, on the contrary, was disdainful of all rules and regulations, and held the laxest opinions on Church-and-State questions, concerning which Salcombe and he disputed by the hour, without coming to any conclusion; yet he, too, in practice, often differed materially from his own theories.

How was it, then, that while the good Doctor walked evenly on, along the straight, decorous path of moral duty, obeying the laws he professed to deride, and keeping his family from the smallest derelictions by the force of his own good example, as well as by the awe he inspired, Salcombe was always flying off at a tangent, and sinning against the light that appeared to be burning so strongly within him?

No one expressed himself more loyally in favour of constituted authorities, or quarrelled with them more frequently, than the impetuous lieutenant; while my father, who,

from the monarch on the throne, and the bench of bishops, irreverently declaimed against the powers that be, in practice conformed to their dictates. While holding the extremest opinions respecting the original taint in man's nature, the depravity of the human heart, and the imperfection of our best aspirations, his life was pure and holy, and his household kept the Word, as it was delivered to them by those grave lips, better than I have seen it honoured under any other roof.

These thoughts, which occurred to me as I lay listening to the distant dashing of the waves, before sleep closed my eyes in that friendly guest-chamber of Salcombe's cottage, were, perhaps, graver than any I had entertained when I listened at our own home to the arguments carried on between him and my father. But life had matured my reasoning powers since then, and I was more capable of forming conclusions on matters which once perplexed me. The pretty little French clock, which Mrs. Salcombe had placed over the mantelpiece, told hour after hour; and still the quiet village, under the downs, with its grey-towered church, the low buildings on the shore, with the union jack flying from the signal-post—more than all, my father's house, with the country roads crossing near his door, rose up before me.

Salcombe called me early, and we went on board his vessel. The pretty green parrot hurrahed at sight of its master, and called him by his name, fluttering its wings with pleasure when he entered the cabin. The bright creature was never happier, Salcombe said, than when afloat—in this respect, at least, accommodating itself more readily to circumstances than the sailor's wife, who sickened at the sight of the sea, and paled when she heard the heart-stirring melody of the winds and waves.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE rowing back from the cutter, Salcombe told me that he was doing duty on shore for the officer at the next station, one of my patients who was still laid up after a severe attack of cholera. We walked over the headlands together; and my friend related to me several particulars respecting the service, and the difficulties attendant upon the performance of its duties in a neighbourhood like this, when every Irishman was a born foe to government. It was almost an impossibility to get together a band of men on whom an officer could rely; and the dangerous nature of the coast afforded very great facilities for smuggling.

On the summit of a narrow promontory, which terminated in a precipitous white limestone cliff, I saw a coast-guard man standing, with his glass pointed at the Castle on the island, and the aerial bridge, over which I again observed figures in the act of passing. The

man was hanging over the brow of the dizzy height so heedlessly, that I thought the sudden frown on Salcombe's face was occasioned by a perception of his danger. There certainly was scarcely a hair's breadth between him and destruction.

When we came up to the place, the preventive-man, with a sudden flush rising to his brow, put his glass into the case slung over his shoulder, and touched his cap to the officer. I could not but be struck by his appearance, and the extreme neatness and finish of his appointments. He was more than a head taller than our brisk lieutenant, yet to the full as active and seamanlike in his movements. His bright, dark eyes flashed proudly as he saluted my companion; and he listened to the directions given him with an air of dignity which would not have ill-besecmed an O'Neill or O'Callaghan; or, in short, any ancient chief of true Milesian origin.

Salcombe seemed annoyed when he came back to me. I could not help saying,—

“Well, I think you need not complain of your men, if you get such splendid fellows to join you. He must be six-foot-two, without his shoes; broad-chested, and, at the same time, lithe as a wild Indian. Have you many more of that build in the service?”

“No, not one,” said Salcombe, shortly. “I don’t half like it. The worst part is that he does his duty so faultlessly, there is no quarrelling with him. But hang me if I know how to talk to him, or give him orders! See, he has got his glass out again!”

We looked back, and perceived that the handsome Irishman had returned to his giddy ledge, while the figures that had traversed the hanging bridge were sweeping over the cliffs towards us at a gallop.

Standing a little aside to let them pass, for the path was narrow, I saw that it was Lord St. Lo’s daughter, who was coming swiftly towards me. I had expected that we might meet, ever since hearing that her family were in the country; but I had done nothing to advance or retard such an event. I scarcely knew whether I longed for, or dreaded, seeing her again.

The graceful, childish-looking girl, had become a woman: there was hardly any other change. I heard her laugh and speak as she came up, and both had the same tone as formerly. Floating far on the sea-breeze, as she rode fearlessly in front of her companions, along the ledge of the cliff, streamed the fair ringlets I so well remembered. Her airy form took the same easy lines as when I had so often watched the wind on the western

downs blowing those soft curls from her cheek, as she bent forward to meet it.

She did not pass me by, as I expected, without recognition. Seeing that we stood off the path to make room for the party, she had drawn in her rein and rode by us slowly. Salcombe was in front, and I saw a wondering, doubtful glance cast at him. The next instant, her hand was in mine, her glad, kind accents of welcome sounding in my ear.

At that moment I heard a hurried step behind me. The bright face at which I was gazing, forgetful of every other circumstance, flushed crimson, and Lady Honoria let go my hand. It was only the fine young fellow we had seen on the look-out who had come up and startled her. He passed on, after a brief communication with his officer, and Lady Honoria recovered herself. She spoke most kindly to Salcombe, whom she remembered having seen often at Moraston, and introduced us both to her brother Damian, Lord Dunleary. She smiled very sadly at me, as she said, in a whisper,—

“The brother I so often spoke about: the only one that is left me now!”

Her horse was very impatient, and the ledge of rock on which it stood pawing the hard ground so narrow, that I urged her to proceed. Nevertheless, when I watched

the long folds of her dark riding-dress vanish behind Kenbane Head, the brightness seemed to have gone off the face of land and sea, and the whole scene looked changed and dreary.

I scarcely know what Salcombe talked about as we went over the next mile of cliff. He was in one of his fidgety humours, and found fault with everything and everybody, declaring that it was impossible to do another man's duty satisfactorily, and that he wished he had left Temple to look after his own men. He always got into a scrape when he set foot on shore.

He brightened up when he spoke, with evident gratification, of Lady Honoria's recollecting him. He had passed her frequently when she was riding with her brother, but had not thought it worth while to make himself known to her. It was the seeing him with me which called her attention to him. Nothing would persuade him, henceforth, that the young lady had not a warm, kind heart, after the reception she had given us, and the grateful manner in which she had mentioned Mrs. Margaret Frankland and my father.

My friend told me that Lord St. Lo's estate was in the worst possible condition, and formed a most painful contrast to the lands of other proprietors in Ulster. His tenantry

were starving round us. Nothing was ever done to assist them by their feudal superior, and the white towers of Dunleary were the mark for curses. He believed, indeed, that the Earl was not bad-hearted, and would have helped them if he could, but he was crippled with debts, and had let all authority slip from his hands. Like many thoughtless, indolent men, he was completely governed by his wife; and Lady St. Lo had a heart as hard as the rocky foundations of their Castle.

They had been living at Dunleary all the summer, filling it with company, in spite of the dreadful suffering round them. All sorts of gaiety went forward, and, according to report, the visitors, in their revels, even mocked and ridiculed the gaunt visages of the famished and cholera-stricken peasantry. Private theatricals, sailing-matches, steeple-chases over the wild hills, were the amusements of the inmates of the Castle, which, on its wind-swept promontory, had defied the approach of the disease that had penetrated into the inland dwellings of their neighbours. Nor had the wild revelry been stayed for an hour, when Death numbered his victims by hundreds daily in the town.

I was greatly shocked by Salcombe's report, and asked if Lady Honoria associated with these unprincipled and thoughtless be-

ings! In general, he thought not. She was with her brother on all the occasions when he had seen her, and had certainly not been present at any of the public gaieties which had offended so deeply the feelings of the community. The Countess and her daughter-in-law were said not to be on good terms, and most of the visitors at Dunleary were invited by Lady St. Lo.

Lady Honoria rode about the country wildly enough, often alone, sometimes in her brother's company. There were stories about her, but they were different from those told of her mother-in-law. He did not believe them to be true. Salcombe stopped abruptly, and I did not question him. It was not my wish that the fair vision I had momentarily seen should be disturbed; nor could I bear to listen to the rural gossip of a small town respecting one whom from boyhood I had worshipped.

The following day I received on board ship a visit from young Lord Dunleary, who brought me a note of invitation from his father. Lord St. Lo was profuse, as usual, in expressions of obligation to our family, and warmly pressed me to return with his son to the Castle. I did not agree to this, but promised to choose an early day to visit them, and the young nobleman spent a pleasant afternoon on board. He seemed an untutored,

inexperienced youth, thoroughly Irish, like his sister, and almost as handsome, but without her quick intelligence and depth of feeling. The officers made him stay late, and then sent him off in the pinnace, which pitched and tossed in the foaming sea under the white cliffs of Dunleary.

I saw a slender form on the battlements, as, after landing him, we scudded over the waters back to the frigate ; and I thought, with tender regret, of the young, high-born creature, who had been for more than two years the joy of our hearts and the ornament of our home, now exposed to temptation and goaded by unkindness, beneath the harsh rule of one who had never been a mother to her, except by name, and under the ostensible care of a father who had long forfeited all claim to respect.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE walls of Dunleary Castle, built of the same white limestone as the cliff on which it stood, gleamed coldly in the sunlight, when I crossed the fragile-looking bridge which alone, at high water, connected the rock with the mainland. When the tide ebbed, the building was more easily accessible, but now the waves were tumbling furiously into the narrow strath, and the roaring, eddying current filled up the channel completely.

Swept by keen breezes, lashed by the salt-sea foam, the bare rock of Dunleary was, indeed, a contrast to The Cedars. Hardly any sign of vegetation was visible upon it. The Countess's garden, a formal, walled enclosure, on the southern or inner slope, had evidently been made at great expense; for the beds were cut out of the hard rock, and filled with soil which must have been brought from a distance. The shrubs, however, were dwarfed by the gales and constant spray—the flowers had mostly perished. The only flourishing

thing I saw was here and there one of the shining holly-bushes that grew to perfection in the rocky glen through which the river flowed into the bay where the Retribution was at anchor. The hollies here were low, and as yet sheltered by the walls of the garden. The sunshine glittered on their spiked foliage as they stood, even on that windy elevation, stiff, cold, and glittering, among the feebler ornaments of the lady's garden.

The high windows of the large saloon at Dunleary were open, and no object but the sea met my eye as I entered. The waves rolled one after another in massive swells, with foam on their ridges, while the sound came loudly to the ear. For a moment, it almost bewildered me. The building, on the north side, stood so close to the edge of the cliff, that it hung quite over the water. In winter, the prospect of that stormy ocean must have been inexpressibly dreary. It was no pleasant, smiling summer sea on which you looked from the windows of Dunleary,—but, at all times, a vexed and troubled briny wilderness, that brought visions of shipwreck to your mind; a cold, cruel ocean, where rugged rocks lay hid among foaming billows, and the winds swept by in opposing currents, past beetling headlands, with merciless fury.

It was now the finest month of the year,

and the gale was, comparatively speaking, lulled; but in spite of the large fire burning in the grate, the spacious apartment was not warm. Lady Honoria's smile brightened its aspect, as, to welcome me, she came from a projecting balcony where several persons were assembled together. Lord St. Lo was much more voluble in his greeting, and overwhelmed me with thanks for the care we had bestowed upon his daughter at Moraston; but his once frank look was changed; his cordial manner had become too flattering; and there was in his countenance that impress of mental weakness which long-continued indulgence in too free habits of life brings with it. Though few people might have seen the Earl actually deprived of the possession of reason, he drank deeply, and the evening's excess was followed by the morning's languor. It was not an occasional indulgence, but a ruinous and fatal habit.

Lady St. Lo was so much younger than her husband that she might have passed for his daughter. Her extremely juvenile appearance surprised me, as she stood, before dinner, in the midst of a group of her own beautiful children. She did not conquer my prejudice against her by any lavish civility, but left me entirely to the care of her step-son and daughter, after bestowing upon me a slight and haughty saluta-

tion. If she connected any idea with me it was that of my father, as one who had befriended the Earl's first wife and her family; and I do not imagine that this was a passport to Lady St. Lo's favour.

Her haughtiness did not affect me. She was no more than any other fine lady in my estimation,—a class for which I entertained no great respect. Even Lady Honoria, beautiful as she was, would not have attracted me, if circumstances had not taken her for a time out of her own sphere, and brought her nearer to us. There was the same soft accent in her voice now that I listened to in the low, dark parlour, where she sat in my mother's place. The blinding sunbeams fell through the high sashes of Dunleary on the golden tresses on which, at night, my father used to lay his hand as he blessed her; and in her warm Irish bosom there were grateful feelings still, which reminded her that she had been admitted by us, not only to our home, but to the inmost sanctuary of our hearts.

I do not think that any of Lady St. Lo's guests interested her step-daughter. There was an expression of weariness on her face, when she spoke with them, and a look in her eyes as if her thoughts were far away. Besides, she knew that I was a stranger, and more peculiarly her charge; and, though I

built no fallacious hopes upon her kindness, I saw that many envied me the beautiful girl's attention. I imagine, nevertheless, that it was not the fashion in that house to pay much court to her. Lady St. Lo was the centre of attraction. Her wit, sparkling and cold, like the holly leaves of her parterre, kept the conversation alive during the repast, which to me was somewhat tedious. The Earl revived, too, when the table was hospitably spread and surrounded with guests, among whom his splendid wines circulated freely. It needed a glance at the windows, dimmed with spray, to remind one that this gay assemblage was collected on a rocky islet, at the northern extremity of famine-smitten Ireland.

It seemed to be an understood thing with the Earl's guests, that the prevailing distress—which was alluded to, after the ladies left the room, in connexion with the arrival of our ship upon the coast—was entirely attributable to the improvidence of the lower orders. Many well-sounding aphorisms were broached respecting the want of resources of the Irish peasantry, and the cleverness of the inhabitants of France and Belgium in converting the commonest roots and herbs into savoury food; living also on fish, on chestnuts, and various edibles, which the whole company, regaling on dainties brought from far, declared to be ex-

cellent sustenance. From what I could gather, most of those present had been absentees for the greater part of their lives, and were better qualified to speak of foreign manners and habits than of those of their own countrymen and women. I, who had lately seen much of Irish life and death in mud-walled cabins, with rafters polished and blackened by the smoke which refused to pass through the hole in the thatch cut for its egress, did not cast another stone at these much-enduring, sorrow-laden people.

None of the party missed me, in all probability, when, leaving them sitting over their wine, I found my way back through passages running between walls many feet thick, with deep loopholes everywhere affording views of the sea, to the projecting balcony of the drawing-room, where Lady Honoria was now sitting quite alone, looking pensively out along the coast, which, with its bold headlands and basaltic ranges of pillars, was visible from the corner she occupied.

She smiled sadly, and turning her head away from the shore-line on which, before I came up to her, her eyes had been wistfully fixed, she asked me various questions about the frigate, and the voyages I had made since first leaving home.

I told her that I had not seen my family

for several years. On my return, not long since, from the West Indies, an appointment to the *Retribution* had been offered me, and I had at once accepted it. The ship had been dispatched in haste to carry succour to the sufferers by famine, and no time was afforded for visiting my home. I knew that no great alteration had taken place at Moraston, but Aunt Margery's last letters prepared me for finding my father aged and less active.

"You'll have to go and help him, Charles," said Lady Honoria, with a soft voice and air of affectionate interest. "Don't neglect that duty. There's a command to honour your parents—a blessing and a threat, too—I wish I'd kept it better!"

She sighed deeply, and once more her glance travelled along the line of sea-washed coast.

"Where's Damian?" she asked, quickly. "Is he with the others, drinking away what little sense God gave him? He is not like poor Adolphus, bright and beautiful; but I love him dearly. I hoped he'd stay with you."

"No one seemed inclined to move," I said; "and, I confess, I wanted to talk over old times at Moraston with you. That brought me here, for a man like myself has very little in common with your gay guests. What amuses them is harder work to me than actual

toil. Your brother is young and less grave in disposition. But, tell me, how is the pretty maiden you took away with you, Kate Brand? Is she as great a favourite as ever?"

"Kate does not live with me now," Lady Honoria answered, somewhat coldly. "There were circumstances——" she stopped and hesitated. "I'd rather not say more about it; but 'twas best she shouldn't come to Ireland. I was fond of her once, but not lately; and she went home to her own friends before we came back to Dunleary."

I was sorry to hear what implied misconduct on the part of our west-country girl, or caprice on that of Lady Honoria; but her manner checked me, and I did not like to ask further questions. She saw that I was dissatisfied, and said, hurriedly,—

"I'd not wish to be hard upon her, the poor lamb that had strayed from the fold. May be 'twas the foreign air that blighted her, and our evil ways. It's another curse laid upon us. Don't name her here again!" she said, still more hastily, as a step approached over the polished floor of the saloon. "Oh, is it you, Damian? I can't tell you how glad I am to see you away from those people! Stay by me, now, this evening!"

The young man looked at her with strong affection.

“I’d like nothing better, Honor, darling!” he said, with a more decided brogue than her own. “Faith, I’m tired of it all, and longing to be out of it! They are down at cards, now, and my lady playing as high as any man among them. You know the look she has in her eyes when she’s wild about it.”

Lady Honoria turned her proud head away with a gesture of disgust. The young lord yawned wearily as he stepped upon the balcony and, leaning over the stone balustrade, surveyed the panorama of the coast.

“What makes you like this post, Honor?” he said, drawing back his tall but somewhat indolent-looking figure, as the wind swept past. “It is cold as my lady’s charity. I can’t think why you sit shivering here in the very teeth of the north wind. It cuts like a knife. Let’s go in and make a blaze in the drawing-room. There’ll be another coal-brig wrecked, blackening the waters, soon, to make fuel plenty; and all waifs and strays come to us. No need to spare when all’s wasting!”

“You didn’t speak so lightly when you sprang into the water to save the poor souls from drowning, Damian,” said Lady Honoria, the tears filling her eyes. “Don’t belie yourself before Charles Frankland. He knows the worth of human life and mortal woe, and does his best to save one and lighten the other.

He was the first," she continued, in a low, proud whisper, "to volunteer to man the life-boat; and, oh, the cowards wouldn't follow him! Then the coal-brig parted on the rocks, and we saw—Damian and I—one poor head above the waves. My brother did not wait for a rope, but leaped into the sea, and *one* helped him—only one—and he hadn't seen it at first, but was just come there. They swam, and the waves played with them like corks—now up, now down—I see them now! Sometimes I thought them drowned, but they got nearer and nearer to where we saw the speck dancing in the surf, and brought him in—a man—a human being—rescued from death,—one who had a wife and children to mourn for him, if he perished! They're blessing Damian, those Christian hearts!—the woman and her children—at this minute."

"Did we do anything for that fine fellow, Honor?" said the young man, who had retreated from the balcony while his sister spoke, and now put out his head again as her last words reached him. "I mean, that coast-guard man. I forgot all about his helping me. Did any one remember to reward him?"

"Yes!" said Lady Honoria, while over her fair features a bright flush spread suddenly, like the warm, sunset glow irradiating the white headlands. "God and his own

heart repaid him, Damian!—and I,” she added, more slowly, as the young man uttered an impatient ejaculation,—“I, who stood by looking on, longing to aid,—thankful for the rescue,—I did not forget him.”

“That’s enough, Honor. I don’t like to hear that a brave man gets nothing but the approval of his own conscience, though ’tis as well to have that, for perilling his life; especially when he is only a poor coast-guard man, with some pittance of pay, and lots of people depending upon him. Those fellows, however young they look, always have a wife and loads of children. If *you* remembered what he had done, no doubt he got his deserts; though, how you always manage to have enough to do what’s right, under the present *régime*, is hard to guess. But enough of that—come in, now. What will we do with ourselves this evening? Let’s have a hit at backgammon. Not for money—we see enough of that—I know you’ll not stand it, but just by way of something to do. It’s the dullest spot, this, Mr. Frankland, you ever came across in your travels; and I hear you’ve been round the world. Suppose, if Honor won’t play, you tell us some of your adventures.”

I scarcely remember how the evening wore away; but the poor youth, whose abilities had never been cultivated, kept asking, almost like

a child, for more stories, till night gathered over the waters, and I thought it time to leave them. Lord Dunleary said he had not spent such a pleasant evening since they left Wiesbaden, and he quite understood Honor's being so fond of Moraston. We sat round the fire at the end of the saloon, taking little heed of the groups gathered round the tables. I believe they were playing high ; and, when I paused for a moment to bid the Countess good night, the face I had admired some hours previously looked ten years older, and every feature was working with excitement. She hardly vouchsafed a word to me, but Lord St. Lo left the table, and parted from me cordially, begging me to repeat my visit to Dunleary on the first opportunity.

The young lord walked across the bridge with me. His step was steady, and he had not touched a card. At present, he was unstained by the vicious inclinations which had brought ruin upon his family ; but his want of mental resources exposed him sorely to temptation, in the dearth of every rational amusement.

After we separated, I remembered that Salcombe, who, as usual, was in hot water with his commanding officer for the time being, had asked me to look as I came along, whether the man at the last outpost of Tem-

ple's district was on duty when I passed his station. Salcombe had got into trouble on his account, he said, the week before; as, after he himself had gone by, and could have sworn the fellow was at his post all right, the Inspecting-Commander had visited the look-out on Kenbane Head, and reported that the coast-guard man who should have been there was missing.

There was no doubt about the man being on the watch now. I saw his cigar shining in the darkness as I came up, and he wished me a cheerful good-night. It was the handsome young fellow whom I had seen hanging over the cliff, when I passed by a few days before with Salcombe, and he looked as wide-awake and active as ever. We exchanged a few words together; and, though he spoke with the strong accent of the province, his expressions were well-chosen, and his ideas manly and sensible. I saw the lights burning in the windows of the Castle I had left, while we stood talking to each other, and the stars shining over its towers reflected in the dark waters at the base of the cliff.

CHAPTER XV.

I SPENT the next fortnight principally on shore, at Salcombe's house, for he would not allow me to seek other accommodation in the town, and my health required the change. Our captain, one of the pleasantest I ever sailed with, though some of the unruly spirits among his crew called him a tight hand—had a man's heart in his bosom, and seldom disregarded any application made to him on the plea of sickness, or any other equally reasonable ground. The moment I asked for leave to quit the ship for a short time, it was granted. He knew that, if a case requiring attention occurred on board, I should be at hand, and that I had worked hard in the terrible period which followed our first arrival, and might consequently need relaxation.

Captain Fairfax and his officers partook largely, during this time, of the hospitalities of Dunleary Castle. Though often invited there, I did not generally accompany them. The tone of the Earl's society was gayer than

suited my taste or principles; and, for many reasons, I deemed it wiser to hold myself aloof from it. Indifferent health and spirits pleaded my excuse, and the Countess's manner, so haughty upon my first introduction at the Castle, relaxed slightly when she found that one, at least, of Lady Honoria's low connexions at Moraston was not obtrusive.

Young Dunleary justified my idea, that he was a goodnatured fellow, by often leaving the lively society at his father's to visit me. He and Salcombe took a liking to each other, and very often the youth seemed to prefer a cruise along the coast in the *Shamrock*, to the gay parties at the Castle, or on board the *Retribution*. He was very fond of his sister, and used to lie on the deck of the revenue cutter, asking me questions about Moraston, and the life she led with us. It had done her good, he said, and given her kinder feelings than the rest of his family. English women were more sensibly educated than Irish. He thought,—the young man added, after a pause, as if he were going to enunciate some praiseworthy sentiment,—they were a deuced deal prettier!

We never could persuade Salcombe's wife to accompany us on any of our cruises, some of which were extremely pleasant. She had a perfect horror of the sea, even in the calmest

weather, and declared that it made her uncomfortable to go on board the cutter, when it was at anchor in the harbour. The parrot held her in detestation, and used to cry out, "Go home, Fanny!" and utter a succession of shrieks the instant she came into the cabin. One day, when her husband had persuaded her to lunch with us, the bird, which, on other occasions, was a pattern for good behaviour, grew so unmanageable that it was very evident both stars could not shine in that small hemisphere. The parrot was at home, and carried the day, hurrahing joyfully when Mrs. Salcombe, quite overcome by the noise and the fear it caused her, gave up the field, in spite of our offers to banish her rival, and returned, equally well pleased, to dry land, and her sunless cottage out of sight of the sea.

This attempt having totally failed, we went on various excursions without my friend's delicate wife, and, I am afraid, he did not enjoy them at all less than we did. All the wonders of the rocky coast were explored, and the white sails of the cutter gleamed in many a secluded inlet. Lieutenant Temple had recovered his health sufficiently to look after his own duties on shore, just in time to prevent Salcombe's falling out irretrievably with the district commander; and, fortunately, the re-

quirements of the service afloat did not interfere with our amusement. Salcombe managed, in some ingenious manner, to look after the smugglers, while Dunleary and I visited everything-worth seeing in the neighbourhood, and made astonishing geological discoveries.

When we came back, one afternoon, after a couple of days' absence, we saw that the *Retribution* had altered her bearings, and was apparently getting ready for sea. Salcombe lent me his boat to go on board, and I found Captain Fairfax giving orders, all the officers at their posts, and the crew on deck, heaving the anchor. The captain seemed glad to see me back, but gave me the option of remaining with my friends, if my health was not quite restored, since he expected to return in a few days. There were news come of serious disturbances at a town on the west coast, where the Relief measures had been ill received; and the *Retribution* had been ordered round to assist in restoring tranquillity.

I did not hesitate about taking my part in whatever might be going forward; but, finding there was still a little time to spare before the turn of the tide, for which the captain was waiting, I went ashore to say farewell to Salcombe and his wife, and remove my property from his spare room. We had had such foul weather during our cruise that he feared

Mrs. Salcombe would be uneasy, and landed, therefore, as soon as he could leave the cutter.

They both seemed sorry to part with me, and Fanny prognosticated illness for the baby the moment I should quit the house. The little creature, she declared, had been quite provokingly well while they had a doctor staying with them; and she herself had felt better. I was still talking to her when Salcombe came in to hurry me off. He had been detained speaking to one of Temple's men, the good-looking fellow I had noticed on the cliff, who had asked him to procure, through the medical officer staying at his house, the favour of a passage for him round the coast, on board the Queen's ship. Salcombe believed he was anxious about his mother, who lived at the place where the people had been rioting. He had got leave to visit her. Of course, I acceded to his request.

Moriarty, so Salcombe named him to me, was waiting close to the man-of-war's boat when my friend and I got down to the quay. He was as neatly accoutred as usual; the leather belt and buckles of his dress shining brightly, and his tightly-strapped kit all ready, in case of obtaining a passage. He touched his cap to Salcombe, and thanked me when I said I had no doubt Captain Fairfax would allow

him to go with us. There was no time to be lost, and he sprang into the boat. The men dipped their oars into the water, and we shot rapidly across the bay.

I could not help looking at the man, as he sat with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed, with a dark look in them, on the frigate. I did not know anything of his history, but I fancied it might be a remarkable one, and that he had once been in a better position. At present, however, there was no leisure for conversing. When we got on board, Moriarty went forward among the crew, and, after mentioning him to Captain Fairfax, who willingly accorded permission for him to remain, I forgot him. The officers, released from their duties, were crowding together, talking, glad of a change. The ship was under weigh, and sailing majestically past the white cliffs and towers of Dunleary,—where, on the battlements, we could see with our glasses figures standing to watch us,—the basaltic pillars of Pleaskin, and the ruins of Dunluce Castle.

We skirted the north coast of Ireland, dropping down to the west with favouring winds, which carried us past the frowning rocks of Donegal with marvellous speed. The boundless Atlantic received us with a more smiling aspect than the North Sea had vouchsafed to put on. Its blue waters

stretched away farther than sight could reach, without a cloud above them.

The prevailing distress had fallen very heavily on the peasantry of Mayo and Galway, — naturally an improvident race, and always sufferers from the subdivision of land, low wages, and the substitution of middlemen for those who are bound to feel an interest in the people over whom they are born to rule. If the relief from England had been withheld, thousands must have perished from starvation, in spite of the assistance which, in Ireland, and, indeed, everywhere, the poor are ready to give to each other. At the port we were approaching when we first saw the steep cones of the Mayo mountains, rising above a bay covered with, apparently, numberless islands, the Irish traders had shipped off cargoes of oats, and locked up in store-houses provisions for want of which the townspeople were dying in the streets. The agents of government, by their rapid and energetic measures, reduced the price of food, and caused the hoarded meal to be brought into the market. Relieved from the immediate pressure of famine, the populace, before our arrival, had broken through all restraint, in order to make themselves masters of the stores provided for them by the public charity. The troops guarding the meal-carts were

severely handled, and more than one soldier had fallen in the performance of his duty ; while the most fabulous stories of impending starvation found credence at the very moment when, if the populace had rested tranquil, the worst was over, and steps which they were doing their best to defeat had been taken to allay the evil. There are no people so difficult to reason with as the Irish, when their passions are once excited ; and even their own clergy had exerted themselves in vain to stay the tumult.

There was not sufficient depth of water for the ship to enter the inner harbour. The trees of a noble domain fringed the shore, almost to the quay, running out for some distance into the island-covered bay, at which we landed in boats. I saw the coast-guard man, Moriarty, leap into the first that was got ready ; the sailors, with their usual kind-heartedness, probably pitying his anxiety and making room for him. The town, with its streets lined with trees, more resembled a continental city than an Irish seaport. The blue peak of the Reek towered up behind it ; streams of water gushed down beside the shady pavements ; and the fine trees, of which I had seen but few in Antrim, here abounded. In contradiction to these pleasing features, an angry crowd were fighting and brawling in

the streets, where carts loaded with grain and meal, guarded by soldiery who hesitated to fire upon the people, were trying to force their way with supplies intended to be carried into the country.

A slight diversion was caused by the news that the marines were landing from the frigate, and the sight of our armed force induced the crowd to fall back. The carts pushed on; the soldiers laying about them with the flats of their swords; the beggars howling and cursing in English and Irish with extraordinary volubility. In the midst of almost unimaginable confusion, men began to slink away down back slums and alleys, and into the mud hovels which alternated with houses of more pretension, in the part of the town near the water. I saw the tall, handsome coast-guard man in the midst of a fighting group, which had stopped a carriage belonging, it was said, to one of the magistrates who had tried to carry out the measures appointed for the public relief, and had, consequently, incurred great unpopularity. Moriarty's cutlass shone bright in the air, as a ruffian shook his fist in the old man's face, and was proceeding to offer him further indignities. I hurried up with some of our men, and the crowd dispersed, but not before a blow from one of the rioters had stretched

the object of their animosity insensible on the ground.

Moriarty had thrown some water, from the stream gushing down the street, in the pale face of the gentleman, and rested his head on a door-step. When he saw me come up, the young fellow said, hastily, "See to him, sir! I fear he is badly hurt!" and plunging down a narrow side-street, probably anxious to provide for the safety of those of his own house, he was out of sight in a moment.

A better-disposed crowd was round me now; the rioters had followed the provision-carts, which had advanced some way; and a few of the dwellers in the more respectable houses of the picturesque main street came out to offer help. I was soon master of the name and abode of the gentleman who had been struck down in the tumult; and, by the time he could be removed, his carriage—which the mob had pelted, and so terrified the horses that the coachman was forced to drive away—came back to the spot. I got into it, with its master, and we drove slowly out of the town, in the direction of the mountains, towards his place of residence.

As we passed along, I looked in at the open doors of some of the most wretched habitations I had seen in Ireland. Mud

walls, sod-covered roofs, with a mere opening to admit the rain and afford egress to the smoke, half-clad women and children, showed the poverty of the land. All the men were swelling the town mob, and the road we followed, almost at a foot's pace, was quiet.

CHAPTER XVI.

ABOUT four miles from the town, the carriage turned in at the gates of a park filled with fine timber, the sharp cone of Croagh Patrick seeming to rise up from among the trees, though the mountain was really at some distance. Peeps of blue water shone through the boughs, and the turf was of the pure emerald green, of which, as yet, I had not seen much on the stony coast of Antrim, but which, wherever it spreads in Ireland, has a hue and softness peculiar to itself. My companion did not regain consciousness, and I had a melancholy drive; now and then distracted from painful impressions by the beauty of the scenery through which I passed, for the first time, with the gray head of the venerable proprietor of the domain resting, like a dead weight, against the cushions I had arranged for him in the carriage. His pulse still beat faintly, but he did not open his eyes till we stopped at his own door.

I jumped out hastily, and was met on the threshold by a tall, stately lady, with the marks of considerable, though now faded, beauty in her countenance. She looked surprised, and the next moment alarmed, at seeing a stranger ; but still she greeted me courteously, as if there was a fine instinct in her nature, which made her, even when agitated, incapable of forgetting what was due to herself and others. Then, putting me aside, for I would have stayed her, and tried to hurry out some words of preparation, she said :—

“ I understand, sir ;—some accident has happened ;” and went to the carriage, of which she opened the door herself, noiselessly, but with so quick and firm a hand that the action was performed before I could assist her.

I heard her speak in a low tone of deep anxiety, and could distinguish a faint answer to her inquiry. Her voice had done wonders already, and I was glad to think that the new patient, so suddenly put under my care, was likely to have so good a nurse. The sound of his voice relieved me from great apprehension ; and, when she turned round to ask me what was to be done, I was able to impart to her the hope I felt, that her husband—a look had convinced me the stately lady was his wife—had not received material injury, and would in a short time recover.

A number of servants had come out, and, after a brief delay, I succeeded in arranging a mode of lifting their master from the carriage, and conveying him to his sleeping chamber; the lady, all the time, aiding my suggestions by her better knowledge of the place and its resources, and affording me the most prompt and efficacious assistance. I was very anxious to ascertain the extent of the hurt which had been inflicted, and this could not be done till the sufferer was laid on his couch and undressed.

When the necessary examination was over, I followed a servant to the room where Lady Sarah O'Malley, with a countenance of unshaken firmness, but pale and grave, had, at my request, awaited the intelligence which, I was thankful to have it in my power to say, was entirely satisfactory. As the colour rushed into her faded cheek, under the influence of that joyful emotion, it struck me again how remarkably handsome she must have been when young. I did not longer oppose her wish of going to her husband; and, as I had used my best endeavours to promote tranquillity, and she promised to keep the room where he was lying profoundly quiet, I accepted her offers of refreshment, and descended to the hall, where it was laid out for me.

In a book that lay upon the table, I saw

the maiden name of my dignified hostess ; and I remembered having heard formerly—I could not recollect through what channel—of the firmness she had long since displayed, in guarding her father's sick bed from disturbance. It might possibly be one of the numerous stories of the Rebellion which Lady Honoria used to tell us at Moraston ; for it was in the troubles of Ninety-Eight that a demand was made at the house of the nobleman in question, on the part of the authorities, for the surrender of arms of all descriptions. His daughter,—a celebrated court beauty, and once, as it was reported, upon her first introduction into society, the object of a Prince's adoration,—took upon herself the responsibility of refusing, sooner than awaken her sleeping parent, whose life would have been endangered by the interruption of his repose. Truly, I could not leave her husband in better hands, for, it was plain, years had not subdued that noble, courageous spirit !

After seeing that Mr. O'Malley was sleeping now, I strolled through the grounds, which were extensive and beautiful, with thriving young plantations, almost every tree in which, the steward told me, was planted by his lady's own hand. There were indications of prosperity everywhere around us ; and the eldest son, Colonel O'Malley, when he came into

the property, would find it, my informant added, worth twice as much as when his father succeeded to it. This appeared to be principally owing to his mother, Lady Sarah's, vigilant management. Hers was evidently the master mind. I gathered from the remarks of my companion that the "ould squire," as he called Mr. O'Malley, had never been a popular character. His countrymen could not forget, that when sent to represent them in their own Parliament, he had betrayed their national honour and interest, and voted for the Union. This would never be forgiven him in Mayo, and Colonel O'Malley had been ill received, when, two years ago, he stood for the county. The second son was a wild youth, and had fallen into disgrace with his mother; but more people than the garrulous old man beside me thought he had a better heart than the Colonel.

When I returned to Mr. O'Malley's room, he was still under the influence of the sedative I had administered, and sleeping very calmly. I thought, however, that its effect would wear off soon, and, as I wished to be at hand when he awoke, I sat down by the side of his bed. Through the door into the next room, which was half open, I saw Lady Sarah seated at a table writing. Her pen glided softly over the paper, scarcely making a sound, and I could just

imagine the fair, lady-like, somewhat stiff, characteristic letters it was inscribing.

The house was profoundly quiet, and, nothing disturbing the repose of the sleeper, it lasted longer than I expected. The shades of evening closed in, and Lady Sarah stopped writing, and, after looking into her husband's room to see that all was going on well, sat down by the window of the adjoining apartment. I could perceive the folds of her dark garments resting on the floor, and the outline of the small foot supported by a cushion, but nothing more. Suddenly, the door into the outer room from the corridor opened sharply. Lady Sarah's rich dress heaved, but did not rustle, as she started up. Then I heard a manly tread, and a voice lowered to an impatient whisper, but still more distinct than any sound lately audible to me, said :—

“Mother! I came to you the moment I heard of his danger. Why do I always find your heart barred against me?”

I did not hear Lady Sarah's answer. Perhaps she signified to her son that his words might reach other ears; for he said, still more impetuously, though his voice was kept down,—

“Why do you stop me? Is it I that care if the whole world were hearing me? Only that I wouldn't wake the sleeper, I'd go in at once to him!”

Again the low, but, I fancied, somewhat cold and perfectly pure English accents of the mother broke in upon the impatient, despairing remonstrances of her son.

“Are you mad, Shane? I am nursing your father, who must not be disturbed. Francis has more consideration, and did not even ask to see him, when he heard how ill he had been, and what danger there still was, if he should be awakened suddenly. And you, who have been so long absent, force yourself in, as if your place were beside him! Go!—you have forfeited it long since.”

“Do not say so, mother!” answered the young man, in a voice hoarse with emotion. “If you send me away again, maybe I’ll never come back. Wouldn’t that trouble you?”

There was a long silence in the next room. I saw the small foot move impatiently to and fro on the footstool. Then, for one instant, a tall, manly form knelt in the growing darkness beside her.

“Mother! does my voice never speak to your heart, because the accent of my father’s country lies upon it? How could I help it, when you left me with the old followers, and took Francis away with you to England, though I was the youngest—the baby that should have lain at your heart? Have you no place left in it for me?”

Lady Sarah's reply was couched in a hurried whisper, which, of course, I strove not to hear, and of which not a single word reached me. Her softly-modulated tones did not extend as far as her son's broken ejaculations.

"Then, hear me!" he said. "You'll not go first. Here, in my father's house, which you've not made a home to me—where Francis has all your favour—I'll never trouble you more! Good bye! God's blessing be upon you! I can't leave her that's more to me than all the world. Tell my father that I came to see him, and 'twas you forbade my crossing the doorway."

I heard not a word more—not even a closing door; and deep silence and darkness settled down upon us. After a short time, Mr. O'Malley awoke, much refreshed by his long sleep. A lamp was lighted, and a couch made up for me in an adjoining chamber; and the whole household, excepting Lady Sarah, who insisted upon sitting up with her husband, retired to rest.

In the morning, Colonel O'Malley, the eldest, and evidently the favourite, son, came to pay his father a visit. I thought his polished accents cold, compared with those of the young man who had passionately pleaded, the night before, for admittance to the sick-chamber; but no one mentioned his name. If Lady

Sarah complied with his request, that she would inform his father of his visit, it was not in my hearing.

I did not consider my presence to be necessary any longer, and I was anxious to return to the ship. Lady Sarah thanked me most gracefully, but I liked her less since her harsh treatment of her second son became known to me; and I was not sorry to take my leave of her.

Mr. O'Malley's carriage set me down, at my own request, on the outskirts of the town, as I wished to walk through it. The suburb through which I passed was rather pretty, with views of the bay and of the mountains of Achill opening upon me at intervals. I stopped at the door of an almost English-looking cottage, with roses and myrtle clustering over the porch; and an old dame, who was busy laying out the breakfast on a table covered with a spotlessly white cloth, invited me to enter.

As I came in, a man who was stretched on a settle, in a shady corner of the cottage, rose to his full height, which was considerable, and greeted me with some embarrassment. I saw that it was my friend, Moriarty, the coast-guard man, and easily guessed from her glances, full of pride and affection, that the dame was the mother he had come to see.

“Sure, and it's my heart's darlin' he is!

and stole a minit from his employment, which is not half good enough for the likes of him, to come and see how it was with me, when the boys were tearing the sods up, an' hooting, an' scatterin' the meal upon the waters," she replied, when I asked if she had suffered from the disturbances. "I thought, whilst I was biding alone, an' the stones flying past the panes, what bad luck it was for a widow like me to be in it; and who should come up but my jewel, an' it was which could take to their heels fastest, when the lads saw him cross my doorstep. If it's a friend of yours the gentleman is, asthore, you're mighty welcome to ask him to stay an' break his fast with us."

Thus pressed, Moriarty rather shyly invited me to sit down to the board which his mother was hospitably spreading; but I told them I had taken refreshment before leaving Mr. O'Malley's house, and wished to get back to the ship.

"An' how's the ould gintleman, the morn?" she said, anxiously. "I've lived in his house, an', faix, them that did that once wouldn't easily forget it! It's a paradise for comfort! Perhaps my lady's a bit high and grand, but there's goodness in her, and I'm proud to think of the trust she used to place in me."

She curtsyed, as if to the recollection of

her dignified former mistress. Moriarty got up, and, going to the door, stood looking out along the country road that wound into the town, past his mother's humble dwelling.

"I'd be ready for you, sir, at any hour when the ship's likely to sail," he said, as I was departing. "My business in this part of the country is done."

"Och, sure now, you'd not be cruel enough to leave me so soon?" said his mother, overhearing him, and coming to the door with the home-baked loaf she was cutting in her hand, and tears filling her eyes; "I've scarce seen you yet, dear, and age is telling upon me. If you stop away as long next time, maybe you'll not find the ould mither."

Her son put his hand upon her stooping shoulder affectionately.

"Cheer up, mother," he said; "no fear of my not coming back here. It's the only home I've ever had worth naming."

"Well, it's always open to ye, such as it is, and the gintleman, if he could put up with it. There's clane sheets to put on the bed. I'll make up another for you, if your friend likes to stop here," she said, turning to me, with genuine Irish hospitality, and then to Moriarty, as if wishing him to second the invitation.

"This gentleman mayn't like you to call

him my friend," said the young coast-guard man, blushing. "He is one of the ship's officers—Mr. Frankland—the doctor who has been so kind to our people when the cholera was bad, and asked for a passage for me in the Retribution."

"Well, the blessing of the saints be upon him for his goodness," she said, curtsying with an air of perplexity. "I'm sorry I've made so free; but, anyhow, you're welcome to put up here, if the air suited you; some say it's pleasanter than on ship-board."

I thanked her for her kindness, but declined her offer, and walked on, leaving the mother and son, as I hoped, enjoying their brief holiday together. I told Moriarty not to hurry himself, as I would be sure to let him know before the ship sailed; but I met him again in the streets of the town that evening, and he informed me that he had taken leave of his friends, and was coming on board. The little town was restored to tranquillity, and I heard that the frigate was expected to sail in the morning.

I was rather sorry for the old dame, who had so rejoiced to see her son, and wondered that Moriarty should not choose to spend the night at her cabin; but it was no concern of mine, and I did not interfere. I saw him walking up and down the lower deck with

a gloomy, dissatisfied air; and he seemed glad when the wind changed, the breeze freshened, and the crew began their preparations for departure.

Just before we sailed, Colonel O'Malley came on board, at his mother's particular request, as he said, to thank me for my attention to his father. He was now nearly recovered, and trusted that, if I made any stay in Ireland, I would visit them again. My movements were so fettered that I could make no promises; but the prospect held out of salmon-fishing and grouse-shooting on the mountains was so tempting, that I did not absolutely refuse, but undertook to think it over. The Colonel was much more agreeable now than he had appeared during the short formal visit he paid to his father's bedside. He had been in various countries,—in India, South America, and Africa,—and was a thorough sportsman. This kind of talk was so beguiling, that he did not leave the ship till all hands were piped up to weigh the anchor; and we saw his boat still dancing on the sunny waters of the bay as we sailed past its entrance.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT Salcombe's particular request, I again took up my abode in his house, after our return from our cruise to the west, going on board every morning to see whether my services were required. I was leaving the ship, after visiting a poor fellow often on the sick-list, and now suffering from a low kind of fever very prevalent in Ireland, when Captain Fairfax, who was walking the deck with one of the lieutenants, called to me, and very politely communicated some expressions which Lord St. Lo had used, regretting that they saw so little of me at the castle. Captain Fairfax added that he believed he and the other officers were partly indebted to me for the great attention paid to them at Dunleary; since he found I had a much earlier acquaintance with the Earl, who professed himself to be under the strongest obligations to my father.

Our captain's manner, when he chose, was so winning, that almost before I knew

what I was about, I found I had consented to accompany him, the following day, to Dunleary. The fact was, I had exercised more than common resolution in staying away so long, and was fully disposed to accept Lord St. Lo's next invitation, even before Captain Fairfax handed to me the note which had been enclosed in one to himself.

I do not know how Lady St. Lo liked the very open admiration which almost every one of the officers of the Retribution manifested for her beautiful daughter-in-law. From the captain to the little middies, who, when she went on board the frigate, esteemed it an honour to take any trouble in her service, and the crew, who crowded the deck to look at her, she was decidedly the fashion with our gallant tars. Lovely as, in a different style, her haughty step-mother undoubtedly was, there was something in her expression and bearing that failed to attract the homage of any class of those honest-hearted sailors. As I said before, from our chief to the bare-footed fellows in their loose jackets and wide trousers, with curls clinging in clusters inside their open collars round their brawny throats, the crew of the Retribution were devoted to the beautiful, warm-hearted young Irish lady, who never passed over any act of kindness, or even the roughest

mark of a seaman's gallantry, without a grateful word or smile.

Nevertheless, I was surprised at seeing how very slight an impression the more serious attentions of a man like Captain Fairfax appeared to make upon her. In conversation, he was remarkably agreeable, and I saw, when, upon the occasion I have mentioned of our going together to Dunleary, he sat beside Lady Honoria at dinner, that he was bent upon pleasing her. I believe there were very few ladies in the world, whose affections were disengaged, with whom his efforts would have been unsuccessful; but, now, a faint, sad smile, a few low-breathed, careless words, alone repaid him.

Though she looked beautiful, my fair opposite neighbour—for we happened to be on different sides of the table—was very pale and languid. The transparent delicacy of complexion was again visible which I had noticed after her long illness, when I returned home and found her still residing at Moraston. Her eyelids drooped, and, more than once, I fancied their heaviness was caused by unshed tears. Though the party was larger than usual, she was dressed with extreme simplicity, as if no one whom she cared especially to please was present. Not even a rose in her bosom relieved the uniformity of her white

muslin dress, gathered in folds to the contour of her slender waist, and falling in soft, airy waves, without garniture of lace or embroidery, to the ground.

Lady St. Lo's dress, though also principally white, and quite simple enough for good taste, in that wild sea-side residence and summer season, was a perfect contrast to her daughter-in-law's. Every minute part was studied, as well as the whole general effect,—from the cobweb lace that veiled her fair arms and neck, to the rich scarlet geraniums set in clusters among her dark tresses, and the enamelled, snake-like bracelets, brightened by sparkling gems, that set off her white hands.

Her manner to me was somewhat more cordial than it had been on any former occasion, and she condescended to make her own pretty children known to me by name. There were five of them living, and I observed a tremulousness in her voice as she alluded to the twins she had lost abroad. Those clustering round her now were of all ages, from twelve to three, and singularly pretty. She let them pull about her delicate lace and climb upon her knee with a mother's fondness, and the features I had thought haughty relaxed as she played with them.

I did not stay long in the dining-room

after the ladies retired, and the conversation became general; but, leaving Lord St. Lo and his guests over their wine,—I knew they would sit late,—I went up-stairs. There was no one in the large drawing-room but Lady Honoria, and even she was not visible; but I knew where to look for her, in the far corner of the projecting balcony, which I had observed to be her favourite seat, on account of the fine view it commanded, not of the open sea, but all along the splendid range of coast.

I did not feel myself an intruder on her solitude, for she had seen me enter the saloon, and called me to her; and, when I came near, she made room for me, as she had once before done in the high staircase-window at Moraston, when we were both little more than children.

I could not help asking her if she was well, and if she did not think a little of the quiet of our old home would recruit her strength. I had received a long letter that morning from Aunt Margery, full of warm interest in all that concerned her, and of inquiries whether she ever meant to visit Moraston again.

“Maybe, I’ll be coming when you least expect me!” she said, faintly smiling, while her eyes looked larger and heavier than before. “I feel sometimes as if I’d not be able to

bear it long. But I'm not ill: don't let your kind father and dear Aunt Margery fret about me, as they used to do when I was so wayward; till, for a time, while I was with them,—it didn't last longer,—they taught me better. Would you mind——Oh, I can't tell you how I'd like to see the letter from home!”

Her look and soft intonation of the last word touched me deeply, and she read my old aunt's letter, full of domestic news, with close attention.

“And so Edward and his wife are tired of Moraston and want to settle elsewhere: will the Doctor like it?” she said, looking up in my face with sympathy, as if quite taken up with our humble affairs. “But it's best, as your aunt thinks, to let the young people go and manage for themselves. Oh, how wisely and kindly she writes! And here is what your father says about grieving to part with his grandchildren, but not wishing to prevent what seems to be for their good. The brave and kindly people, though their hearts are bound up in you all! If we had had such parents and friends—Damian, and poor Adolphus, and I—how different we'd have been!” She stopped abruptly, and went on with the letter, not speaking another word till she had finished and given it back to me.

“Thank you,” she said, simply; “it has done me good. There are words in it that will come back to me when I want them, though they were not meant for me. But there’s the thought, too, that they’re fond of me still, and expect better things from me than I’m afraid they’re likely to hear; for oh, Charles! I’m just as wild and wilful now, when the fit comes upon me, as I was when I first came—no more than a child in knowledge—to stay with you. I couldn’t be a year and more in your house without hearing what’s good and right, but I’m far off from practising it. There was the time we spent abroad that spoilt poor Kate, who was all humility when we left Moraston; it did not do me any good. And then I came here with Damian, and we had no one to guide us—only our own wills to follow, which often led us astray. It was just our childhood over again, without its perfect innocence. I was idle, and went about hither and thither with my bold brother in a way that would have shocked dear Aunt Margery dreadfully;—riding unbroken horses, and just letting them carry me where they liked after the hounds—over fences, wherever Damian went, I followed him. He liked me to do it. Poor boy! he had troubles of his own; and though I did not take his part at the

time, I pitied him when it was all over. You'd never believe the wild things I've done in his company—shooting, and fishing, and riding over as much ground in a day as a fleet horse—and I rode the swiftest—could carry me through. It wasn't womanlike, Aunt Margery!" she said, while an arch smile suddenly broke over her features, as if she were addressing my demure maiden relative. "I know that, now, as well as you can tell it me; and I hadn't forgotten what you used to say about my playing cricket, or running races with my brothers, when we were mere boys and girls together. Well, it was much worse when I was a grown-up lady, and I had minded you, and left off my hoydenish ways; but, I'm ashamed to say, I took them all up again, just as I did the brogue, when I came back to Ireland."

I could not help laughing, and I was very glad to see the bright look that had made the sunshine of our home replace the weary expression I had been noticing in her countenance.

"You cannot, at least, complain," I said, "of having been subjected to severe control; and the open-air life and active sports you have shared with Lord Dunleary,—who, I have no doubt, took good care of you,—have, I I trust, strengthened health which I remember to have been very feeble."

“He take care of me? — Damian!” she exclaimed, laughing somewhat scornfully; “I’d be the leader in any mischief we got into together. They say women always are, and maddest ever! but don’t laugh at me, Charles Frankland; it’s no jesting matter when a motherless girl like me, with none to counsel her, rides wild about a country like this. If I’d no guidance, then, it was not love that set me free, but more like hatred; and I remembered the yoke—I bore the mark of it on my chafed neck—and started off if the slightest touch was laid upon it. In my heart, too, there was the sore rankling; and it was not joy that set me off on my mad frolics, but despair, and the thinking there was nothing on earth worth living for.”

Lady Honoria bent her head low on the cold stone of the balustrade. I thought she was weeping; but, in a moment, I saw that her eyes were not closed or blinded by tears, and that she had lifted her head slightly, and was gazing with a totally changed expression at a light which had suddenly burst forth, as it appeared to me, at the mouth of a deep cave into which I had once penetrated, because Salcombe told me its curious petrifactions were worth seeing. The smugglers of the coast were said to know it well, and often concealed their tubs in the intricate passages of the rocks.

"I must tell Salcombe of that light," I said, after watching the glimmering radiance, which sometimes burned very clearly, then appeared to go out, and was several times rekindled. "I am certain that is a smuggling signal; I have lived too much upon the coast not to know when I see one."

"Oh, you wouldn't mention it, surely!" said Lady Honoria, eagerly; "I like to see it burning. That light—it has not been kindled lately,—perhaps it is not what you fancy."

"I scarcely see what else it can be," I answered; "and I know Salcombe is expecting the smugglers to try and land a cargo. You would not wish me to let my friend get into trouble for want of a word from me?"

"It's not his business!" said Lady Honoria, haughtily; "he is the officer afloat; let others look after the coast. Oh, Charles, leave the poor fellows alone! You know your father, though he wouldn't buy their goods, never told of them. Don't come to Ireland to turn informer!"

I laughed, but there was deep anxiety in her tone.

"I'm a real Irishwoman at heart, Charles, and that light shone out against the dark rocks, when I was saddest, to cheer me. You

may laugh at me as much as you please for being superstitious, but I always was and will be ; and I take it for a good omen, so don't cast trouble upon me."

The drawing-room was by this time brilliantly lighted up, and filled with guests ; but Lady Honoria did not move, or offer to join them. Several of the officers, at times, came into the balcony, but her manner was so cold that it gave them no encouragement to linger. She still talked to me, and seemed to wish to keep me near her ; rather, I think, to prevent another from taking my place, than from any more flattering reason, for her thoughts evidently wandered, and her manner was fluctuating ; sometimes flightily gay, at others deeply sad. The affectionate confidence which had marked it at first was not restored.

Captain Fairfax did not move away from Lady St. Lo's side all the evening, until it grew late, and then he came to the window and asked if I was ready to accompany him. Lady Honoria rose and shook hands with us both, but she did not return to the drawing-room. The Earl, with his usual friendliness, went with me as far as the bridge, reiterating the wish he had already expressed to see me more frequently, and charging me with messages to my father at Moraston.

As I walked along the cliff at some dis-

tance behind Captain Fairfax and his officers, for I did not hurry myself to overtake them, I looked back more than once at a light shining in what I believed to be the balcony where I had only an hour before been talking with Lady Honoria. While I gazed at it, the sea-mist, or a bird flying across, seemed to hide it from me ; but, after a moment's disappearance, it was always to be seen again, brighter than ever.

This faint, twinkling star, the only spark of radiance visible, (for the night was now overcast, and none of the other windows of the reception-rooms fronted the coast,) mingled with my thoughts, which dwelt much upon her words, as, one by one, freshly as they fell from her lips, her abrupt sentences of frank confession returned to my recollection. The wild life she had led since she went forth from our quiet home, the want of love and care she had experienced, the incautious manner and unprotected mode of life which might have laid her conduct open to misconstruction, inspired regret and anxiety. Then, like the one starry light at Dunleary, which, as I turned my head again, seemed to shine more steadily above the mists, the remembrance of her clear, truthful glance re-awakened hope and confidence, and I felt sure, however imprudently regardless of opinion she might have

been, no deeper error than girlish wilfulness could be attached to her character.

In passing over Kenbane Head, I noticed that there was no coast-guard man on duty at this post, which was the one Salcombe had once before desired me to observe, as being of peculiar importance. The sentry-box on the summit of the headland was empty, and I heard only the voices and footsteps of the officers in front of me. It was not Salcombe's duty to look after the men on shore, now that Temple was quite well, and able to resume his own work; but I had heard so much about the smugglers of the district from my active-minded friend, who protested that every native of the province was in league with them, that I could not help connecting the absence of the coast-guard man from the look-out station on Kenbane Head with the smuggling signals at the mouth of the cave which I had watched with Lady Honoria.

Before we entered the town, Captain Fairfax dropped back, and walked beside me nearly to the spot where a boat was waiting to take him off to the ship. I fancied that the long conversation I had seen him holding with Lady St. Lo had left an unpleasant impression on his mind. Though he praised her beauty, it was with a strong reservation in favour of women less attractive, perhaps, but more re-

tiring, and not so desirous of general admiration. Nevertheless, he said that she had been extremely agreeable—too much so, in fact, to be entirely successful in fascinating the proud, fastidious sailor.

He walked on in silence for several minutes, and then said, somewhat unconnectedly,—

“Thank Heaven, she is not her daughter!”

I could easily supply the names he had left out; and the reluctance of my companion to mention Lady Honoria confirmed the belief I had for some time entertained, that she was the object of a serious attachment on his part. Of ancient family, ample fortune, and unblemished honour, Captain Fairfax would have been, by most persons, regarded as an excellent match for the daughter of an improvident Irish peer; but I did not wish him success in his suit. Without examining into the cause of the ill-humour which was every moment growing upon me, I at once decided in my own mind that the handsome officer by my side, who was, I felt convinced, balancing the *pros* and *cons* with respect to an union with one, in my opinion, immeasurably his superior, merited nothing better than rejection.

My answers became shorter as he went on questioning me about Lady Honoria's mother, the beautiful Countess who had died at The Cedars, at the same time with my own parent,

and whose memory was consequently enshrined as something sacred.

“The first Lady St. Lo did not die of consumption,” I said, when I found myself compelled to speak. “She was my father’s patient at The Cedars, where she underwent much bodily suffering from a painful internal malady, which was said to be aggravated by mental distress. All women cannot bear to witness the failings of a husband with as smooth a brow as the present Countess.”

“She is no favourite of yours, Frankland ; nor, indeed, of mine,” said Fairfax. “There is something of the hyena in her bright, keen eye, and I do not trust the apparently unclouded sunshine of her temper. There must be darker shades in the moods of one whose horizon is so cloudy ; for the Earl’s life is most uncertain ; and I understand that the part of his property which has not been swallowed up in the vortex of his extravagance is settled upon Lord Dunleary. No wonder his step-mother has a quick eye to detect any symptoms of decaying health. She told me, to-night, that he had such a violent illness, on the Continent, of some mysterious nature, that his life was despaired of. Nothing could have saved him but the removal of certain objects which excited painful regrets, and Lady Honoria’s devoted care of him, when, to try the effect of his native air, as a last

resource, his sister brought him over to Ireland. She was much too young to be entrusted with such a charge, but Dunleary would bear to have no one else near him. These violent accesses of temper, as it may be called in the first instance, breaking out in persons of feeble constitution, have threatened at different times to be fatal to all the Earl's first family; and, since young Adolphus left home for sea in a fit of ungovernable fury at his wishes being opposed, and returned to them no more, Lady St. Lo says she has been afraid to contend with their humours."

Captain Fairfax walked on moodily, and I saw that, in spite of his dislike to the Countess, her insinuations had some weight with him. At last he came closer to me, and said, in a low, emphatic tone,—

"Did you ever hear that there was madness in the first Lady St. Lo's family?"

"Never!" I answered, indignantly. "My father has lived for many years, where my grandfather dwelt before him, close to The Cedars. Had anything of the kind existed, they must have known it. The present hare-brained proprietor of the estate is much the unsteadiest of all its possessors."

"I am infinitely indebted to you, Frankland!" said the Captain, with an air of relief. "That is the question I have been longing to

ask you. Lord St. Lo is a *vaurien*, certainly, but not mad,—at least, not hereditarily so. One would be glad to rescue any person in whom one felt interest from his influence. That young Dunleary, for instance — there must be something good in him to make his sister so fond of him. I should like to invite him to take a cruise with us, if, as I believe to be most likely, the *Retribution* is ordered to the Mediterranean or the Tagus. It would please his sister extremely. By the way, what was the reason,—you have not told me that yet,—of her being sent from home to your father's house, and left there for two years? I believe it was the best thing that could have happened to her ; but, it seems, on the part of her family, rather a heartless proceeding. What a lovely creature she must have been, even then !”

He looked at me inquisitively.

“We all thought that Lady Honoria was much to be pitied,” I said, “and the state of grief and misery in which she came to us required peculiar care. This, I believe, she received at my father's, and her delicate health was strengthened by the quiet life she led with us. She had been suffering from acute neuralgia, brought on by her extreme grief at the loss of her youngest brother.”

“The young midshipman who was drowned

off St. Malo, after quarrelling with his captain?" said Fairfax. "I remember it well;—there was a great deal said about it in the service. Some blamed Harcourt more than the poor boy;—others said St. Lo was an undisciplined youth, and a most difficult subject to manage. He was very handsome, like his sister, and, had he fallen into good hands, might have turned out well; but in a large ship, among a crowd of youngsters, who was likely to study his peculiarities? I believe Harcourt to be a most tiresome, pragmatical fellow. He brought his ship home from Buenos Ayres, two years afterwards, with three of his officers under arrest—the first lieutenant shut up in his cabin the whole way. *They* brought him to a court-martial for undue severity to his crew, and inflicting punishments which were not according to the regulations; but the charges against him were not satisfactorily proved. It is a very bad precedent for junior officers to bring accusations against their superiors, and, in most cases, something transpires which tells against their own character, and prevents their rising in the service. I know it was so in this instance."

I did not wish to argue with a man whose prejudices were sure to be in favour of his own class; but I had heard a good deal from various quarters respecting Adolphus St. Lo's unfor-

tunate disobedience to orders, and my conviction was that he had been hardly dealt with. Without expressing any opinion of my own, I told Captain Fairfax the result of my inquiries on the subject.

“Well, it may have been so ; I am inclined to believe that it was. At all events, it was an act of boyish rashness, and the poor fellow perished in consequence. That must make us pity him ; and his sister,” he said, in a low tone, “she must have felt it deeply.”

We did not pursue the topic, and on the quay I was joined by Salcombe, who was just come off the water, and met me after I had parted from the officers of the Retribution. He was in a great hurry, as usual, and considerably excited. Though I had had a long walk, over somewhat rough ground, I could not refuse to mount the cliff as far as the lookout station above the town, before we went home to his cottage.

“What’s the meaning of that ?” he said to me, in a low tone, after taking the glass from the man who was silently walking up and down in front of the flagstaff, on an elevated platform of rock, near the station. “There, does that focus suit you ? Tell me what you make out yonder.”

“The lights of Dunleary Castle,” I said, without looking in the direction he indicated.

"I am just come back from dining there, and the great drawing-room was illuminated as if for a ball."

"Psha! nonsense! I don't mean that. Those windows face the sea, and have been dark these two hours. I saw the grand blaze there, shining down into the water when I was out in the cutter, and augured that your party was a gay one. What I want you to notice, now, is that perverse, twinkling star, now seen, now gone. There,—it was dashed out then, or, more likely, something interposed to hide it. I have been looking at it this hour or more, and have seen it extinguished and re-lit fifty times running. This night is not the first, by many, that I have watched it."

"It must be the mist," I said, laying down the telescope, after using it, with an indifference which, I confess, was feigned. "How long have you observed this?"

"I watched it, night after night, while Temple was ill, and pointed it out to him when he was able to resume his duty, just before the Retribution sailed," said Salcombe. "Then, provokingly enough, no signals were made, and we nearly had a quarrel. Now, he must see that I was right. This is the first time since his recovery that any one, at this late hour, has hung out a light from Dunleary. Nothing has been going on for the last week,

and just when I notice that twinkling ray again, tidings come that a cargo is to be landed. Positively, I believe there is a connexion between some person at the castle and these foreign vessels."

His abrupt remark broke in upon such a different train of thought in my mind, that I answered him impatiently.

"You are quite mad about the smuggling, Salcombe! What can the Earl's family have to do with it? Do leave the matter to Temple, since you have mentioned it to him. He seems a capital officer."

"I don't know;—I wish I could make it out!" said Salcombe, without attending to me, but narrowly observing the distant gleam. "One, two;—now it is gone. There is no fog to-night thick enough to hide it from us so completely. How many will you be able to count before the next flash?—Five! I can't understand it."

Both of us, I believe, with equal curiosity, watched the glimmering spark, which undoubtedly obeyed some peculiar laws of its own. I thought of wavering torch-gleams seen from high prison-towers in Italy, by which the victims of Austrian tyranny were said to hold communication with their friends and concert plans for their deliverance; the uncovering of the light a number of times in

quick succession, or its appearance at measured intervals, standing in place of words and letters.

When I put down the glass, the head-boatman, who was on duty at the look-out, respectfully took it from me, and gazed steadily for some minutes at the object which had excited our attention.

Salcombe was by this time in a perfect fever, wanting to call up Temple, who had just gone in to rest, after making the round of his posts for the first time during the night. The old chief-boatman took the matter more quietly. He had seen the same light burning in that fluctuating way often before, and nothing had yet come of it. It was strange, certainly, but perhaps it was no concern of theirs.

At all events, we could see no farther at present into the mystery, if one existed. Dunleary Castle, its faint star at last extinguished, hung darkly over the sea. The wind was coming in cold gusts across the cliffs, and Mrs. Salcombe, who expected her husband home, was likely to be seriously alarmed by a longer delay. Salcombe left directions with the man on duty to mention what he had seen to Lieutenant Temple, and advise him to keep a strict watch; and we went to bed, with the rising north wind roaring

over the chimney-pots, and blowing off into the street the tiles from the roofs of our neighbours' houses, while it promised us decidedly foul weather for the chase after the Dutch luggers, which Salcombe had in contemplation for the morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It blew such a gale, the next morning, that the cutter could not put out to sea. All the rocks along the coast were covered with foam, which flew high above the suspension-bridge at Dunleary, while the winds rocked it like a cradle. Not a corragh was seen in the bay ; and even the daring smugglers could not, with such a sea running, have landed a cargo anywhere between the lighthouses on the Maiden Rocks and Portrush.

Floods of rain swept past our windows, and as no pressing call of duty required my services, I was glad to stay, during most part of the day, in-doors. The Retribution, after her captain went on board, had gone out to sea, not liking the aspect of the coast near her in such threatening weather. There was not sufficient depth of water inside the harbour to float so large a vessel, and, at its entrance, rocks and dangerous reefs abounded, on which, if she dragged her anchors, a ship might in a storm be driven. The tall masts of the frigate

at the entrance of the bay, with the man-of-war's boats and those belonging to the port, constantly passing to and fro, had given an animation to the small Irish town which was sorely missed, when, late in the evening, Salcombe and I strolled down the muddy street, with the rain-water running in swollen rivulets along the kennels on either side of the steep hill on which it was built. My friend, who had been fuming and fretting all day at his enforced idleness, left me almost directly, and went to get information from the men whom he had employed to learn the secrets of the smugglers, while I continued my walk along the coast.

Truly, I shall never forget the magnificent sight which met my eyes, when, not without difficulty, for the wind set right upon the face of the cliff, I reached its summit. It may be that, with those stern headlands and rent columns now opposing themselves to the fierce violence of the gale, is connected the idea which, in some form or other, has governed through life whatever there was of romance in my composition;—and what man, worthy of the name, has not some such unseen world of thought within him?

Mine was purely imaginary, and seemed as far as possible removed from the realities of existence; but, nevertheless, it did enter into

them in spirit, gifting me with ambition, energy, and untiring zeal, even though no object of attainment was before me which I aspired to win; and making me despise most thoroughly the idle recreations and unworthy vices, together with the tormenting scepticism, which had ruined many who entered with me upon the same career. If the feeling that animated every exertion, strengthened faith, and ennobled the toilsome path of duty, was not love—it was at least some spiritualising influence, cast by the pure worship of a dreamer's mind upon my character, which saved me from much evil, and, while it, perhaps, deprived me of some of the light-heartedness of early manhood, deserved my gratitude by restraining me from many of its errors.

Throwing myself down, where a projection of the cliff offered a slight shelter from the wind, I now lay watching the stormy ocean, with the sea washing over and thundering among the outstanding rocks, but gradually receding as the tide ebbed, and darkness gathered over the face of the deep. There was not a sail visible upon the waters; the gulls, hoarsely screaming, were flying from one tall headland to another, their white wings gleaming against the murky hue of the sky, which portended another night of rain and wind.

Even the cliffs and walls of Dunleary had lost their claim to whiteness, and were almost undistinguishable. There was no foaming gulf, at the present moment, between the castle and the land, but a dark slip of dimly-seen, wet sand, from which the waves had receded. I could not at all make out the bridge, which had vibrated so plainly in the morning. The wind had gone down slightly with the tide, but there was every probability of its rising higher when the waves flowed back upon the shore.

At present, there was a dull, gloomy interlude in the tempest, which was not without its melancholy grandeur; the dark, heaving sea subsiding in long, undulating swells, each one leaving on the beach its tribute of tangled sea-weed; the mournful gushes of wind, that still swept over the cliffs, full of dampness from the sea-spray; and the thick veil of a night which promised to be intensely dark, drawing itself gradually over the face of nature, and shrouding successively every object. Now it was a distant headland, then a waving curl of surf, or the sand-hillocks farther along the beach, that, one after another, as I watched them idly, became indistinct, and were finally lost sight of altogether.

Suddenly, amidst the general gloom, a light began to twinkle from the castle of Dun-

leary. It was only what I expected, and had been long waiting to see, yet its first outbreak startled me. I wondered whether Salcombe was watching, and what meaning he would attribute to it. I was not now distracted by his observations, nor by the wish that he should not think I attached much importance to what had appeared originally a very simple occurrence. Now that I was alone, without a soul near me, I watched the light, which I was certain shone from Lady Honoria St. Lo's favourite window, very intently.

It was as he had said—a perverse, fitful gleam, and its fluctuations excited interest. It did not shine like an ordinary light, beaming from the dwelling of human creatures like ourselves, cheering and irradiating the dark waters, but was put out and rekindled in such quick succession, that I tried in vain to count the flashes. I thought, if any communication were held by means of this mysterious glimmer, it must be through the number of the times the light appeared corresponding with the letters of the alphabet—at least, I had heard such an explanation given; but if there were any such meaning in the capricious light displayed at Dunleary, it was meant for other eyes than mine to read—I could not make it out.

My curiosity thus baffled, and at the same

time excited, I thought that I would give the world to know whether any corresponding torch gleamed upon the shore. Without troubling myself to give information to Salcombe, who was quite man enough for the performance of his own duties, I descended to the beach, with the intention of directing my steps towards the great headland, beneath which the cave was hollowed out, at whose entrance, the night before, I had seen signals burning.

Here an unexpected obstacle met me as I walked over the shingles, in the shape of two of Lieutenant Temple's men, who were patrolling the beach, armed to the teeth. They were very civil, but peremptory, and would not suffer me to go farther. No exception had been made with regard to me, and they had strict orders from their officer, who had gone the rounds at eight o'clock, to suffer no person, on whatever pretence, to pass along the shore.

There was no help for it but to get the stringent prohibition relaxed in my favour; and I was turning towards the station, near the town, in as impatient a mood as Salcombe himself could have exhibited, when I saw standing, just at the point that ran into the water of the grey headland I was longing to go past, the coast-guard man, Moriarty, for whom I had obtained a passage in the Retri-

bution. One favour deserved another; and I thought, from his appearance, and from Salcombe's way of speaking of him, that this man was of a superior grade to those who had stopped me.

At first, he seemed to hesitate, but, when I called a second time, Moriarty came forward and spoke to me. He declared himself sorry to refuse my request, but Mr. Temple's orders were explicit and absolute. He was the only person allowed that night to go beyond the point. That was his beat, and he had no right to leave it, even for the moment we were speaking together.

He was gone the instant he had spoken, and I watched the young fellow's tall form disappear round the rocks with a strong sensation of envy, and plodded wearily back over the shingles to obtain permission from the lieutenant to pass through his water-guard.

Near the town I met Salcombe and Temple, visiting the different outposts together. My friend seemed in a better humour than he had been all day, in consequence of having his hands full of business. He had received information, on which he had every reason to rely, that the smugglers were about to attempt landing a cargo at the little haven to the east of Port Noffer, where some of the scattered ships of the

Armada are said to have gone down. There is no sound authority for the tradition, but it is called along the coast "the Spanish Port," and presents the same difficulties to mariners as formerly.

Unless it blew a hurricane, Salcombe was determined to get the cutter out to sea on the morrow. His versatile thoughts had turned into another channel, and he was now of opinion that any lights in this direction, kindled by the smugglers, were intended to deceive the coast-guard. They would not have been displayed so often if a landing had really been arranged in this locality.

I am not quite sure whether Lieutenant Temple, who was a quiet man, still much out of health, but, I think, in other respects, quite as effective an officer as my volatile friend, agreed with Salcombe in utterly disregarding what, the night before, had appeared to be of such paramount importance. He went on with us, though at first he seemed fatigued, and inclined to accept Salcombe's offer to take the night-work for him; and, while our friend talked, he looked about him closely, and questioned the men on duty as to what they had seen, giving his orders in a low, firm tone.

Of course, in such companionship, my right to pass the headland was not questioned. The tide was still on the ebb, and we went

round dryshod. Salcombe surveyed the spot contemptuously, and, certainly, there was not much to awaken suspicion—only a few charred, half-consumed brands, cast down at the mouth of the great cave, which, I believe, no one but myself noticed. The man, Moriarty, was walking composedly up and down his beat, and the Castle of Dunleary was as dark as the starless sky above it.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE peaks of the basaltic columns that surmount the coast near Port Noffer gleamed against as stormy a sky as must have loomed behind them, when, according to the popular belief, the scattered ships of the Armada mistook them for the chimney-tops, after which they are still called, and went down in sight of land, off Port da Spagna. Salcombe's cutter, one of the swiftest in the Revenue service, bore us gallantly through the foaming waters. Neither he nor I felt in the humour for scientific investigations; and we shot past white-walled, distant towns, frowning precipices, and, now and then, thriving villages, whose fair church-towers, backed by trees and rising schools, betokened more prosperity and improvement than the desolated estates of Lord St. Lo could boast. Nothing was allowed to interfere with the business of the hour. I saw that the lieutenant was in serious earnest, and did not delay or impede him. It was not my fault if he swept the

sea and shore with his glass, from day-dawn till near sunset, without making any of the discoveries upon which he relied when we started.

Salcombe was certainly not born under a fortunate planet ; and he now raved bitterly at his disappointment. With all his mental and bodily energy, he had taken fewer prizes, and risen more slowly in the service, than men gifted with half his talent, activity, and zeal. He told me, with bitter vexation, that 'Temple had had the great luck to secure a rich cargo of smuggled goods the previous winter ;' for which capture he and his men had received a most liberal reward. The crew and passengers of a large Scottish steamer had been likewise rescued from shipwreck by his great personal exertions ; and the proprietors of the vessel, shipowners at Glasgow, had sent him a testimonial, which, every time the silver tea-service glittered on Mrs. Temple's table, excited my friend's emulation to bestow as gratifying a gift upon his own pretty wife. I am sure Salcombe would have done as much or more than most men to save life or property, even without the stimulus thus afforded ; but, as yet, Providence had not vouchsafed him a similar opportunity of distinguishing himself.

The cutter, not without considerable risk, had been beating off the rocks of the Isle of

Raghery, while Salcombe and some of his men landed and explored every fissure, in search of the kegs or tubs of spirits, for which it was a notorious place of concealment. They had just returned on board, disheartened by their want of success, when the man at the helm pointed out a suspicious-looking craft stealing along ahead of us, under the lee of the island. Salcombe was on the alert immediately. His handsome face lighted up with joy, as through the foaming seas, throwing showers of spray upon her deck, our gallant Shamrock, under full press of canvas, kept her way; and when she began to gain perceptibly upon the foreign vessel, as we firmly believed the raking-masted, roguish-looking schooner to be, he was quite wild with exultation.

We lost sight of her, for a brief period, as she entered a dim cloud of mist. When the fog cleared off, the strange sail was threading her way through a cluster of rocks that stretched out beyond the main island. Salcombe threw down his glass with an air of extreme vexation.

“That is no French vessel!” he said. “The fellows on board know this plaguy coast as well as I do. Very likely half of them were born upon it, and they are all arrant smugglers; but their craft is not the one we are looking for. It is Colonel O’Malley’s yacht,

the Mayflower ; and I dare say Lord and Lady St. Lo are on board."

"Not in such weather as this, surely?" I said. "It is not the kind of day for a lady to venture on the water ; nor even for a landsman, like Lord St. Lo, to make a trip to the Islands for pleasure."

"Her ladyship is by no means of a timid character ; and, wherever she goes, if it pleases her so to will it, my lord must follow," said Salcombe, contemptuously. "She is a better sailor than Dunleary, and would not have turned back, as he did this morning, at sight of the white caps upon the water."

"What makes them hug the land so closely?" I said, as we stood watching the light, graceful vessel labouring through the heavy surf. "I thought, at first, they were trying to keep out of your way."

"It did look like it, certainly," replied Salcombe. "Perhaps her ladyship has had enough of such a rough cruise, and wishes to land ; but it is useless for them to think of making the port of Raghery in such foul weather. Ha ! by Jove, there goes a signal up the rigging ! The yacht is in distress, and wants assistance."

As the fluttering flag flew aloft, Salcombe went forward, and ordered his boat to be lowered. He pushed off in her himself, with

as many men as the cutter could spare, to the aid of the *Mayflower*, which, almost as fragile as her floral emblem, had sustained considerable injury during the gale, and was found to be in imminent danger. As quickly as it was possible for the boat to return through the turbulent sea, she came back, bringing Lord St. Lo and the Countess, whom my friend had persuaded to go on board the *Shamrock*.

Colonel O'Malley did not leave his vessel : but Salcombe told me in a whisper, when he returned, that he had not the slightest idea how to manage her. By his obstinacy, he had nearly run the schooner upon the rocks. Though an unskilful sailor, however, he was a man of spirit, and chose to stay by his crew, some of whom were experienced hands, till they got the pretty little craft out of danger.

I saw the Countess stand, with her lips compressed, almost as pale as death, watching the yacht, as it went shudderingly through the troughs of the waves, throwing the foam from her bows—her white canvas torn and hanging in ribands from her slender masts. Lord St. Lo was a bad sailor, and went below immediately after coming on board the cutter, leaving his wife on deck.

I did not at first approach her ; and she seemed for a time entirely engrossed by anxiety for the safety of the vessel she had so

lately quitted. All our crew watched the schooner with interest, and openly blamed the blundering seamanship which had got her into her present peril. I believe it was entirely owing to Salcombe's judicious advice, which the Colonel was at last wise enough to follow, that the *Mayflower* was saved from foundering. When the extreme danger was passed, the Countess drew a deep breath, and turned away. I heard her thanking Salcombe eloquently, as soon as he came back on board the cutter. She regretted, however, having quitted the *Mayflower*, where, she said, she had felt no fear for herself. The great excitement kept up her spirits ; and she had been certain the yacht would weather the reef. If Lord St. Lo had permitted—if his sufferings had been less—she would not have left her companions in danger.

Her lip slightly curled as she spoke. It was evident that she was a total stranger to personal fear, as well as to the physical weakness which had completely prostrated her lord. She would not go below, but sat on the deck, wrapped in her boat-cloak, while showers of spray fell over her ; not heeding them, as she still watched the yacht now making its way through calmer water to the neighbouring port. When Salcombe, who was busily occupied with the care of his own vessel, next went

near her, she stopped him, saying, in a low, anxious tone :—

“ Surely, there is no danger for them now? How beautifully she is skimming over the green water!—like a bird, or the spring-flower she is named after, waving on the meadows. I almost wish I had not left her.”

“ You may depend upon it she is getting on better without your ladyship,” said Salcombe, impatiently, pausing for a moment in front of her. “ If I were her owner, I should not like to have ladies on board in such weather. Colonel O'Malley, were he a sailor, would not have invited you; and, for my part, I confess—as you never did me the honour to come on board my vessel before, Lady St. Lo—this is not the day I should have chosen to see you here; and I shall be heartily glad to put you safely on shore.”

He turned away immediately; and soon after, the yacht having dropped behind out of sight, Lady St. Lo looked round, and, perceiving me, courteously acknowledged my distant salutation. It would have been unmanly not to speak to her, and, when I approached her, she asked me some questions respecting the features of the coast, which led to a short conversation. I had never heard her speak so agreeably; her voice seemed softened by some strong inward feeling, and her

countenance—graver than I had ever seen it, and perfectly colourless, as she sat wrapped up in her cloak, with the rain and mist sweeping past—struck me as a much finer one than I had believed it to be, when set off by all the adjuncts of a studied toilet.

When Salcombe came up to tell us that all the perils of the passage were completely over for us, and that he had, with his glass, seen the yacht at some distance, but in perfect safety, making likewise for the harbour, Lady St. Lo thanked him in a most graceful manner for his care, and urged us both so warmly to follow her to the Castle and end the day there, that it would have been ungracious to refuse. Lord St. Lo seconded her invitation when he came up from the cabin to go on shore; and as soon as all was made safe, and the cutter moored in the bay, Salcombe and I went on together to Dunleary.

The fine view commanded from the Castle-rock greatly struck Salcombe, who had never visited the place previously. He stood still more than once during our ascent, pointing out minute peculiarities in the precipitous façade of the opposite range of cliffs, which were more familiar to him than the furniture of his wife's tiny drawing-room. The clouds had lifted considerably, and there were signs of an approaching favourable change of

weather. I do not know that I regarded them with pleasure, since they were fore-runners of our speedy departure.

Lady St. Lo had resumed her usual style of dress and haughty demeanour, and appeared a much less interesting person in her husband's castle than during the storm which she had braved so courageously. She received us with dignified courtesy, and then—probably thinking that she had bestowed sufficient honour upon us in the course of the morning, and by her pressing invitation—she turned away, and devoted herself to her other guests. Colonel O'Malley was the last to arrive, and dinner was postponed to a very late hour, in consequence of his being expected. The *Mayflower*, in her almost disabled condition, he said, had with difficulty reached her anchorage.

He came up and spoke to me about his father in a very friendly manner, telling me that he was still in an extremely vacillating state of health, which often caused Lady Sarah much anxiety. She wished that I might be able to see him again before I left the country, and had sent by her son, in case the *Retribution* had not sailed, a written invitation, which contained further particulars of Mr. O'Malley's case. I promised, if it were possible, compliance with her wishes.

Colonel O'Malley then addressed himself to Salcombe, and they talked for some time about his yacht, and the repairs which were necessary before she could again be fit for sea. With his usual good-nature, my friend undertook to superintend this process; and they found so much to say on nautical subjects, in which the Colonel seemed to take great interest—though Salcombe's abrupt replies and somewhat unflattering ejaculations showed his enthusiasm to be that of a novice—that they did not separate until dinner was announced.

Colonel O'Malley conversed a great deal while we were at table; not exclusively with his next neighbour, but generally; and he appeared to be well informed, and to have profited by his military wanderings. I do not think that he was a man whom ladies would, commonly speaking, consider agreeable. There was a certain degree of hardness in the tone of his remarks, and he was more occupied with himself than anxious to discover the tastes and opinions of others. A thoroughly unsentimental, worldly character, fond of amusement and excitement, I should have pronounced him to be. With a definite object to gain, he might take considerable pains to please; but I doubt his possessing sensibility enough to be always able, even if

he wished it, to forget himself sufficiently to win a woman's favour. Several times, when Lady St. Lo was speaking to him, he left off listening, or interrupted her almost rudely, if some remark made by any person present caught his attention. Then, again, he would allow his tone to rise, and utter an abrupt contradiction, if the phrase she used did not please him; but his arguments were clever and striking, and she appeared to listen to them with attention, and led him on to relate curious anecdotes respecting places he had visited, in a manner that flattered his vanity, and made him take an animated part in conversation.

I never once heard Lady Honoria address him, nor even saw her look towards the handsome Colonel. She seemed very anxious about her brother, who appeared to have had a better reason for his conduct than Salcombe had given him credit for, when he declined taking a passage with us that stormy morning. His sister said that he had been ill all day, and for the whole week he had seemed much out of spirits. Every moment her eyes turned towards him, and the youth's pallid countenance and dejected air showed that she was justified in her uneasiness. He was often very melancholy, she said, with a deep sigh. At times, she doubted whether it

was right to thwart him, even when it appeared to be for his good.

“We may all be sorry for it, Charles.” she remarked, in a choking tone of sorrow; “for I don’t think he is one to bear a great grief with fortitude, if it were laid upon him. I’m stronger than he is, after all!”

She looked at him long and fixedly, her eyes filling with tears; and Dunleary, accidentally meeting his sister’s glance, smiled upon her affectionately; but the next moment the gloom resettled upon his downcast face. He scarcely spoke a word during dinner, though the conversation was of a more lively nature than usual, and likely to be interesting to most young men, since it principally treated of out-door sports in different countries—sleighing in Canada, with bells ringing out over the frost-bound rivers and snowy plains; Spanish bull-fights, and chasing the white bear over the peaks of the Himalaya. In most of the hardy exploits he recited, the Colonel was the hero of his own tale, and young Dunleary’s heavy eyes did not kindle at the narration.

When we went into the drawing-room, Salcombe walked straight up to the window at its farthest end, and stepped into the balcony, which was quite empty. Lady Honoria had not been sitting there at all

this evening; and, as the young Lord had said on a former occasion, it was cold and uninviting, now that, on this bleak north coast especially, summer had come to an end. No one else was likely to take possession of her favourite station. I wondered what observations Salcombe was making, as I saw him standing there, in the dim light cast by the numerous tapers burning in the drawing-room; and I fancied that Lady Honoria's attention, as well as my own, was attracted. When he came back into the room, she told an attendant passing near her to close the side-window; adding, with a slight shiver, that it was too late in the year now to leave it open. The man fastened the glass-door or casement, and drew some heavy curtains of brocade over it, so as to hide the recess completely. Salcombe came up to us directly afterwards.

It was clear to me that he recognised the window at which a light had been so frequently displayed; but he did not make any allusion to the subject. Lady Honoria, whom he greatly admired, spoke to him with more vivacity than she had shown during the evening; and, while most of Lord St. Lo's guests sat down to cards, and Colonel O'Malley entered with as much zest into this amusement as he had, by his own report of himself, evinced in

every sport and pastime which was the fashion of the day in the various places of resort he described, young Dunleary drew near us, and extending his long, weary limbs on a sofa, rested his head on his sister's arm, which lay upon the back of the couch.

"'Twas best you stayed with me, Damian, this morning, See, how your head's been aching all day!—I can feel the temples throbbing," said Lady Honoria, to whom Salcombe had been giving an animated description of the storm, and the peril which the yacht had encountered, before Lady St. Lo quitted her.

"The pitching and tossing of the sea would have made the pain worse than you'd have been able to bear; and there might have been other things to annoy you. How I hate the sea!" she exclaimed, suddenly;—"and we look upon little else at Dunleary."

"You have not overcome your old dislike?" I said. "The last time I saw you at Moraston, I fancied it was wearing off."

"May be I'd have lost it there," she said, mournfully; "but it came back, like many other feelings I'd be better without, as soon as I was at home. Now, I'd rather be in the meanest cottage than in this sea-washed castle, with the salt waves flowing on all sides of it. But I'll go with you, Damian,

dear, to the Islands, if you want to get away, —if the change would do you good. Just say the word, and I'm ready. Oh, Charles! doesn't he look ill?"

I could not but agree in her opinion, though I would not increase the young man's evident depression of spirits by confirming it openly. Salcombe went off at a tangent, in a violent tirade in favour of the sea; Lady Honoria sat watching her brother, scarcely listening to him.

"The sea never brought good to those I loved," she said. "It was the ruin of my poor brother Adolphus, who was never happy but when upon the blue waters, and now lies beneath them. Oh, the wreck and spoil the waves would have to render up, if account were taken of all the gay hopes and prospects that have been swallowed up in the dark, dread abysses that, often when the winds roar round these dreary walls, I fancy in my sleep I see yawning before me! It's a cruel, treacherous mistress; but those who give their hearts up to the love of the salt-water always have a corner in them that's locked up from us, and opens only to the voice that's ever ringing in their ears. I don't think you've been so fond of the water lately, Damian; but I'll go with you, any time you like, to 'The Fishery.'"

"I don't care to go, Honor," answered

her brother, listlessly. "Maybe it would do me good, and maybe it wouldn't. I don't think I mind much about anything now;—at least I've no wish that you can help me in."

Lady Honoria looked at him anxiously. "Don't despair, Damian! There is nothing I would not do, when I see you so ill and wretched."

"Does your ladyship intend visiting The Fishery soon?" said Salcombe, abruptly. "Let me know first, that I may give our men notice to pay attention to your wishes."

"There's little need of that," said Lord Dunleary, affectionately; "Honor knows them all, and is a wonderful favourite. They would lay down their lives for her, those fine fellows of yours on the Island."

"Well, I am glad of it," said Salcombe; "it is well at such a place to be friends with the only inhabitants besides yourselves that it contains. Frankland, if you mean to come with me, you must bid Lady Honoria and Lord Dunleary good night. It is time I was inspecting my posts."

He looked back several times after we left the Castle; but not a spark of light was visible, either above, below, or around us. The lonely Castle,—the cave upon the beach,—were alike dark; and all along the cliff,

Temple's men, alert and active, were on the watch at the different outposts. Salcombe spoke to each of them, asking for the news of the night; and they all gave nearly the same answer, to the effect that nothing was stirring.

CHAPTER XX.

LORD DUNLEARY scarcely seemed in better spirits, when he came alongside the Retribution the next morning, in one of the ship's boats which had been ashore. He readily accepted our captain's invitation to lunch with him; but, in spite of the good-humour and merriment on board, the youth still looked jaded and unhappy.

I could not help asking him, when we were alone in my cabin, whether he had any cause for unhappiness, or if he felt really ill.

"It's much the same with me always now, Mr. Frankland. Faith, the life and soul of me is gone out with the dulness at that old Castle!" he said, throwing himself listlessly into my easy-chair. "Honor can tell you that the place is bad enough when we're only a family party; but when my lady's friends are in it, it's past bearing. There's no telling what we have to endure, and no help for it, that I can see, except breaking loose like

poor Adolphus, and finding a grave as he did, where he's past tormenting. Nothing else we can do will satisfy her!"

There was such bitterness in the young man's tone that, whatever might be the weapon which struck them, the wounds inflicted, I saw, rankled sorely; and he was of an age to put in practice any rash resolution he might form.

"Why do you not persuade your sister to travel with you?" I said, wishing to change the current of his thoughts. "If nothing more exciting presents itself, you might pass the autumn at The Cedars. You would enjoy the shooting, and Lady Honoria, I am sure, would not dislike to see her old friends at Moraston again. I think you want a change; I will lend my aid, if you wish it, in reconciling the Earl to parting with you both for a time."

"It's little he'd mind it," answered Dunleary, while his dull countenance brightened considerably. "I dare say he wouldn't take the trouble of saying 'No,' and, I assure you, I'd like nothing better, as far as I am concerned; but you'll not get Honor to consent to it. She won't go with me to The Cedars."

"Indeed, you do her less than justice," I said. "Yesterday, when you were so unwell,

she told you that she would go anywhere you liked with you ; and I am sure she meant it."

"Yes, over to 'The Islands. She doesn't care about roughing it. I dare say she would go to The Fishery, but that's worse than Dunleary," said her brother, yawning, as he pulled about the numerous articles on my table. "You won't move her, Mr. Frankland, when she's set against a thing. She's as obstinate!—all women are ; if they take it into their heads to go or stay, there's no turning them,—soft as they look,—not if we're breaking our hearts ! You'd perhaps better not mention it."

His brow grew dark while he spoke, and, throwing down the newspaper he had taken up for a moment, he rose and looked through the cabin-window at the dancing water, on which the sunbeams were sparkling as it lashed the ship's side.

"I don't know,"—he added, presently ; "I'm sick to death of the Castle. I don't see that things can be much worse for me than they are. I'm cribbed, and caged, and bound, and scarce able to write a letter ; she watches us so. The Earl's not much better off, for that matter ; but he does not see it ;—that makes all the difference ; and he's so careless,—nothing ever makes any lasting

impression upon him. I'm more English than Irish, though you're half inclined to laugh at me for saying it. It can't be wrong to wish to know a little about the people that are to be my tenants, and the place I'm to dwell in some day, when I hope I may be happier than I am now. I don't suppose she can hinder it, if I live; and where's the use of dying, when it's just the thing she will be wishing might happen to us?"

"I certainly recommend your making the best use you can of the good gifts of youth, health, and strength," I said, looking, I am sure, compassionately at the fine form which so sadly wanted vigour and energy. "English country sports would, I have no doubt, invigorate you, and the game must wait seeing after. I shall have a holiday before the ship sails, I dare say. Come and spend a little time at Moraston. You know Lady Honoria liked our quiet ways when she lived with us."

"You may be sure I will, too!" said Dunleary, eagerly, with quite an altered manner. "I wonder what put it in your head to ask me? I don't think I'm much of a favourite generally. That's what makes me cling so to those that love me—and they are few in number, and some of them far off. Will you come and try if you can do anything for me with Honor? I think she minds what you

tell her; and you know you said just now I wanted a change, and that this would do me good. I think we'll talk it over with my sister."

I was rather surprised at his sudden vivacity; but it appeared as if the prospect I had put before him had really given him so much pleasure, that I could not refuse to do my best to realise the vision I had myself raised. It was a temptation to me to have a fair excuse for visiting Dunleary, where the young Lord told me his sister was spending the day alone, Lady St. Lo having gone with the Earl and Colonel O'Malley to visit some of the rocky wonders of the coast.

Salcombe hailed us from the pier, where he was standing ready to put off in a boat to Colonel O'Malley's yacht, which he had promised to inspect, in order that he might judge whether the repairs necessary after her severe conflict with the gale could be performed at this small port. With his usual good nature, he had gone heart and soul into the business, and was determined to carry it through. The *Mayflower* had superseded every other consideration for the moment, and was the object of his peculiar pride and admiration, now that she was left under his supervision.

He was very angry with us for manifesting

neither curiosity nor interest respecting her condition, when he invited us to accompany him.

“I’ve not the least taste in the world for yachting. You know I’m a bad sailor, Mr. Salcombe,” said Dunleary; “but I liked some of our cruises in the cutter amazingly. As for that tight little craft, as you call her, of the Colonel’s, I’d as soon she had a hole right through her keel, and was sticking fast on the reef where she nearly got aground yesterday, as take any trouble about her. That is,” he added, “provided the right people were in her!”

He turned away as he spoke, and walked moodily towards the Castle. All my efforts to make him keep up anything like conversation were fruitless.

We entered the Earl’s mansion at the back, Dunleary guiding me through the offices to his own apartments. Owing to the uneven nature of the ground, most of the rooms appropriated to the domestics were below the level of the soil, and the young Lord’s peculiar domain was about the dullest I ever trod. The only recommendation it could boast was a ready communication with the stables, where he showed me, with some pride, his own and his sister’s horses. Several of the other stalls were empty; the Countess’s

riding-party being a somewhat numerous one.

“They ’ll come back lamed and foot-sore. My lady rides like the wind, and it’s little mercy she shows to the beast that carries her,” said Dunleary. “Anyhow, I’m glad they’re out, and the place freed from them. We’ll find Honor in-doors, somewhere, waiting for me. I told her I’d be back before the afternoon to ride with her.”

He pushed open a door as he spoke, and we entered a low-roofed saloon in the most ancient part of the Castle, the thick walls and small deep-set windows affording little light, and no prospect beyond the narrow, stone-paved courtyard we had just quitted. There was very little furniture, and what there was appeared of the quaint description found in the neglected rooms of old mansions. Dark oak settees, a litter of fishing-rods, fowling-pieces, fencing-foils, and other manlike gear upon the tables, and half-a-dozen dogs occupying the hearth-rug and carpet. Within the recess of the window, Lady Honoria was sitting reading, but the book fell from her hand, and she started up joyfully, when we entered.

“I’m so glad you are come, Damian; and Charles Frankland with you! I was frightened lest the Countess had persuaded

you to go with them, and then there would be quarrelling and ill-will among you. Besides, I'm weary of being alone."

Her brother greeted her with not less affection than she showed towards him.

"I'm better already, Honor. You can't think what a pleasant morning I've been spending with the English officers on board the ship. I did not think of going when I left you, but while I was wondering what I'd be doing with myself all the morning to keep out of the way of people I don't like, and who don't care to see me, one of the young fellows who dined here the other day met me, and would take no denial but I must go back with him. I'm not much behind time, as it is. We'll have our ride yet, if you like it; and I knew you wouldn't mind when you heard I was happy. Mr. Frankland had me into his cabin, and he'll tell you himself what he thinks about me. I don't believe I'm well, and I won't be better without a change. It's the air of this place is killing me."

"Oh, then, we can't leave it too soon, Damian, dear! Why did not you tell me sooner?" said Lady Honoria, clasping his hand in both of hers, and drawing him down beside her. "Where will you like to go?—it's the same to me anywhere."

"There's but one place I've a fancy for,

Honor, and that's the one that cured you when you were so ill once," said Lord Dunleary, leaving his hand in his sister's grasp while he sat down by her. "I'll never be better unless I go to Moraston."

Lady Honoria drew her hands away.

"I'm afraid I can't humour you, then," she said, somewhat coldly. "The air mightn't suit you as it did me. My father would, perhaps, not like you just now to be at The Cedars. Have you asked him?"

"No. Where's the good of asking, when I know I'd get refused?" said the young Lord, in a tone of deep mortification. "I'm old enough to know what's good for me; and there's one thing, and only one thing, I'd like to do—but we'll say no more about it."

He threw himself on the rug as he spoke, and began playing with his dogs, who returned his caresses with all the affection dumb creatures could manifest.

"After all, they're better than father, mother, or sister!" he said, angrily; "they're the only living things that don't vex and contradict me. Never mind me! I'm not mad with you, Honor," he resumed, when after a few moments of silence he looked up and saw that his sister was weeping; "I knew how it would be, and I don't think I care very much

about it. At least, I'll be able to get over it, and, one day or another, The Cedars will be my own, and I dare say I shall be tired enough of them."

He rose, stretching himself to his full height, and, whistling to his dogs, went out. His sister looked after him anxiously, as he slowly crossed the courtyard.

"I'm sorry I vexed him," she said, mournfully, "but he'd mind it less from me than from others; and if I said yes, they'd never let him go. He's not treated as he ought to be here. No wonder he wants to go away, and longs to be his own master; but oh, Charles! do you think he's fit to guide himself?" Her deeply-pained glance met mine searchingly. "He's thwarted and controlled at every step," she said, while her colour rose; "I couldn't wish him to bear what's laid upon him; but there's scarce any way open that I can see for deliverance. Home is not home when it's filled with strangers, and the children's place taken from them. I wonder what he's thinking of now?" she observed, watching her brother as he stood looking through the portal on the opposite side of the courtyard, swinging the door to and fro. "His heart's full of bitterness and discontent because I refused him his wish, but he'd have more to suffer if I granted it."

“He will soon get over his disappointment,” I said. “It was my fault for raising the thought in his mind of visiting Moraston. I am sorry I suggested it.”

“Will you like me to bring the horses round, Honor?” said Dunleary, coming back suddenly, and stopping in front of the window. “There’s plenty of time for a ride, and Frankland shall go with us. I know the way the others have taken, and we’ll not meet them. There’s a fine fresh wind blowing, and it will do us good to be out in it.”

He bent into the room as he spoke, and kissed his sister. “I’m not angry, Honor, darling! I’ll go to Moraston another time. It’s no use troubling about it now. The thought’s gone out of my head; so don’t mind what I said when it first came across me.”

He seemed anxious to dismiss the subject, and was in better spirits than I had lately seen him during our ride, which lasted far into the evening, and was a very pleasant one. As we were returning, the lights burning in almost every window of the Castle, as well as the increasing darkness, showed that it was late, and that the riding party had come back before us; but Lady Honoria did not quicken her pace. She said, haughtily, that she should

not join them, and that her only reason for doing so, the previous day, was because Salcombe and I were expected. We parted at the bridge — I to return to the ship, and Lady Honoria and the young Lord to spend the rest of the evening in his dreary apartments.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN I went that night on board the *Retribution*, Captain Fairfax, between whom and myself there had been a slight coolness since the day we spent together at Dunleary, received me in a very friendly manner. He told me that sailing orders had arrived, and that his vessel was to refit at Cork, previous to making a voyage to Lisbon. Our faithful ally, Donna Maria da Gloria, was in trouble from her revolutionary subjects, and we were to hold ourselves in readiness to be sent, if necessary, to support her constitutional government, by the presence of a British man-of-war at the mouth of the Tagus.

Lady Honoria's behaviour was kind, but grave, when I went over with Captain Fairfax to take leave of the family at Dunleary. I saw his face cloud over, as if that parting had given a deathblow to whatever expectations he had formed ; but, after the lapse of a few moments, during which Lady Honoria was giving me affectionate messages for all her

friends at Moraston, including Dinah and Galpin, his spirits rallied. I believe that he was a man of a patient, but very firm, temper, and that he postponed the declaration of his love, which, I am certain, he had been pondering over during our silent walk to Dunleary, till a more favourable period, but did not alter his intentions.

The first time Lady Honoria's countenance brightened was when she saw Lord Dunleary's genuine pleasure at the invitation Captain Fairfax gave him to accompany us, as his guest, on our cruise. Our captain would have done more than undertake the charge of her brother for a few months, to win the beaming look of gratitude with which Lady Honoria's eyes repaid him.

Lord St. Lo made no opposition to the proposal, and I think it was a relief to the Countess. Evidently her step-son was an object of dislike; and the intensity of the young man's hatred for his father's second wife was very thinly veiled. Captain Fairfax's invitation was accordingly accepted, without one dissentient word. Lady Honoria's glad participation in her brother's pleasure soon died away, indeed, and her glance wandered mournfully over the sea; but it was enough for her that he liked the prospect, and she would not damp his unwonted cheerfulness by

any sign of grief that might show how sorely, in absence, she would miss him. We stayed scarcely an hour, for we had all preparations to make before starting, besides other friends to whom farewell must be said; and hardly a dozen words were spoken between Fairfax and myself as we walked back to the town across the cliffs from Dunleary.

When I told Salcombe I was come to bid him good-bye, he expressed himself as very sorry to lose me, but, at the same time, added, gravely,—

“Perhaps the ship’s being ordered away is the best thing that could have happened for you, Charley.”

I did not ask him what he meant. The danger he apprehended for me was not absent from my thoughts; and I do not know that I should have had resolution, though I saw the reef on which I was running, to steer clear of the peril, if I had been left to my own discretion.

He took me in to say farewell to his wife, from whom I most sincerely regretted to part. She had made her small cottage like a home to me; and though, perhaps, not the most suitable wife in the world for a man of Salcombe’s profession and habits, I quite understood his warm affection for her. Out of sight of the sea, Mrs. Salcombe was always

cheerful, ladylike, and sensible ; and possibly the lieutenant, with all his rough ways, liked his pretty home-bird all the better for not reminding him of the tiresome details of his daily life. In Fanny's parlour there was not even a tuft of sea-weed to be seen ; but, generally, a few garden-flowers, as delicate as herself ; and the young mother, and pretty baby, with its fresh-looking English nurse, who had followed her mistress from the banks of the Avon, presented as peaceful a domestic picture as the often-vexed and weary coast-guard officer could desire to rest his eyes upon, in that bleak corner of Erin.

As we walked down to the boat, which was waiting to take off to the ship some of the officers who, like myself, had lingered till the last moment, on that wild but hospitable shore, Salcombe strongly advised me to marry early, and settle at Moraston. He was certain my father must need help, and our family were so much respected, that it would be a great pity if one of his sons did not aid him now, and eventually take his place. Nothing steadied a man like a happy marriage, giving him an object for which to exert himself ; and he hoped no wild, romantic ideas, such as, he sometimes fancied, might be floating through my brain, would prevent my forming a suitable connexion.

I thanked him for his advice, and told him he had adopted the best means of enforcing his arguments, by admitting me into his house so kindly, and allowing me such an insight into matrimonial felicity. Nevertheless, at present, I had no intention of giving myself up captive, and, I feared, Fate had nothing half so good in store for me as the prize he had been fortunate enough to win.

He shook his head. “Depend upon it, Charles, you may fare as well, if you limit your thoughts to your own sphere. Not but what Fanny is very far superior to me in refinement, but she does not think so; and, poor little thing! though her troubles were of a different kind before she married, she learned from experience that there must be difficulties to contend with in this life. It is quite otherwise with ladies of rank; when they have to meet trial, it takes them by surprise. They are not, as it were, brought up to it, and they start and fly off at the first touch that ruffles their fine plumage, till the proud creatures—many of them through the misconduct of fathers, husbands, or brothers—have to lie down and die in their cold, empty nests, robbed of their bright feathers. I suppose they have their own way of bearing it—all women endure bravely—but we cannot understand it: and I advise you, Charles, from the

depths of my heart, to leave them to their own courses. Don't pain your kind, honest heart about one who, however beautiful and graceful she may be, and gracious, too, as I have seen her, will never waste a thought upon you. Nay, more—though I have not chosen to say it sooner—who is playing a desperate game of her own, in which she is engaged heart and soul, mind and body; and for the furtherance of which she would not care if scores of men who love her as unselfishly as you and your gallant captain both do, were lying deep down, forty fathoms below those blue waters.”

He pointed as he spoke to the waves of the sea, then laving the posts of the quay by which our boat was lying. There was no time to answer him, even if, at the moment, I had known how to turn into words the thoughts that chased each other through my brain; but I knew that his meaning was a kind one. We crushed each other's hand warmly and parted.

We touched, on our way to the Cove of Cork, at that western port to which the frigate had been sent round to quell the disturbances at the time of the famine-riots, and Captain Fairfax gave me permission to land, in order that I might visit Mr. O'Malley.

The state in which I found him more than

justified the uneasiness expressed by his eldest son ; and I felt convinced that the injury he had sustained from the blow dealt to him in the crowded street of the town was even more serious than it had at first appeared. There was a total want of energy in his constitution, a dulness of the eye, and a degree of rambling hesitation in his words, which it gave me pain to witness. Lady Sarah, on the contrary, was all life and activity, supplying her husband's place more fully than ever, and, in the arduous employment thus imposed upon her time and thoughts, not allowing others—scarcely, perhaps, herself—to perceive the great difference between Mr. O'Malley's former habit of avoiding the cares of business from a natural indolence of disposition, and the absolute incapacity of attending to them, which had now crept gradually upon him.

Once or twice, during the interview between us, when I was left quite alone with him, I fancied that some pressing weight rested upon his mind, and that he felt inclined to unburthen himself to me ; but words apparently failed him. He began two or three sentences, and left them incomplete, or ended with referring me to Lady Sarah for explanation. When I told him that I had seen his eldest son at Dunleary, he said, hurriedly,—

“ What do you mean, sir ? I have but

one—now, at least. There were two, once ;—both my boys ; but Colonel O'Malley is the only one left.”

I answered that, at the time of his illness, I had heard his younger son ask to be admitted to his presence. The old man turned quickly upon me.

“ Yes, sir, you did ; and Lady Sarah very properly refused. She knows what is best for me ; but, sometimes, God help me ! I think that poor Shane has never had justice done him. There, there, now !—that is not what I meant. Of course, she was right ;—why am I troubled about it ? You must ask Lady Sarah, if you wish for more information.”

He became so much agitated that I could say no more ; but I thought it my duty to mention what had passed between us to Lady Sarah, and to urge upon her the importance of relieving Mr. O'Malley, in his present enfeebled state, from any subject of anxiety which could tend to impede his recovery. She thanked me for my advice in a way which told me how officious she considered my interference in their private affairs ; saying, however, that I might rest assured she would, as far as lay in her power, keep her husband's mind tranquil. Mr. O'Malley shook hands with me very warmly, at the last ; but his wife and I parted somewhat distantly. I could not reconcile

myself to the idea that the mother, from whatever motive, stood in the way of the father's bestowing his forgiveness upon their son.

After leaving Mr. O'Malley's mansion, I looked in, as I passed its open door, at the cabin of Moriarty's mother, certain that even a word about her "darlin'" would give the warm-hearted Irishwoman pleasure. I doubt whether, on my former visit, she was not too much taken up with her son to scan my features, for she seemed very much puzzled when I first spoke to her; but she brightened up at my saying that I thought it would please her to hear how highly Moriarty's conduct was spoken of by his commanding officer, and how much Lieutenant Temple valued his services. He had told me that he placed more reliance upon him than he could venture to repose in any other of his subordinates.

"In coorse, he would!" she said, drawing herself up. "I'm proud to hear he bears such a character, in whatever line of life he chooses. It would ill become him not to be first; and, I'll engage for it, he keeps his place better, maybe, than some I could name, that's standin' in the room of others, an' niver resting till, inch by inch, they've cleared the ground, and got it all for themselves to shoot up in. But it's not his pleasure to complain, so I'd best lave that alone, and thank you,

sir, for callin'. Though I knew it before, through the voice spakin' in my heart for the baby I nursed at my breast, tellin' me that he's sure and sartin to be winnin' favour with his superiors for the time being, and holdin' straight on in his coorse, it's right glad I am to be certified of it by those that have seen him. I'll not be lookin' on him agin, maybe, for months or years," she continued, her eyes filling with tears. "It's lavin' the counthry, ould Ireland, for ever he do be, soon. Sure, it's not to be expected he'd stay in her. It's ever the best that go forth to win their bread and till the ground; and the selfish an' cruel stay at home an' eat honey an' milk, an' all the fruits of the land, without the throuble of sayin' 'with your lave,' or thanking God for His bounties. You'd best not mind me, sir, when I run on about my jewel;—the boy that was the darlin' idol of my soul iver since the hour he was born, and had no one else carin' for him, so to spake, but me, a poor widow woman, livin' in this cottage an' left alone in the world, with both those that were dear taken from me."

She stopped suddenly, and cast a glance into the corner of the cabin, where a rough wicker-cradle and some childish toys were carefully put away, together with a seaman's pipe, and one of the oars of a corragh.

Perhaps her husband's boat might have gone down in some fierce Atlantic gale ; but there was such anguish in her face that I did not like to question her respecting the tale of sorrow, to which that glance at those humble relics bore reference.

I shook hands with her cordially, and tried to prevail upon her to accept a small token of remembrance ; but she steadily refused to receive money. Lady Sarah, she said, would never suffer her to want.

"But it's he, my own darlin', that keeps me supplied with all that's comfortin'," Moriarty's mother added, clasping her hands. "The blessing of the ould, sorrowful, lone woman be on him, by night and by day, fallin' early an' late, like the dew's ! and on you, too," she said, curtsying, "for troublin' yourself to call upon me ! It's proud I'd be to see you again, if ever you are passin' this way."

I had no time to lose, and, though I hurried through the town, the last boat was waiting for me when I reached the quay, and the crew were growing impatient. All the disturbances in the little town were over ; there was scarcely a sound louder than the gushing of the streams that ran down on either side of the quiet street, and the rustling of the trees overhead as the fresh wind swept through their

branches. The Mayo mountains and the headlands of Achill were the last that I saw of Irish scenery for several days, during which we kept at some distance out to sea, till we steered between the forts at its entrance into the deep waters of the fine harbour at Cork, in which, it is said, England's largest fleet might anchor safely, and where, now, numerous vessels and yachts were moored.

I took a passage in one of the large Irish steamers which touch at our southern and western ports, intending to spend the short space of time at my disposal with my family. Though various other modes of employing this period were suggested to him, our Captain's guest, Lord Dunleary, persisted in the wish he immediately expressed to accompany me. Instead of joining the parties some of the officers had made to visit Dublin or Killarney, the young man preferred spending a week at The Cedars. He had not seen the place since he was a child, and felt more interested about it than he could pretend to be in Magillicuddy's Reeks and Mangerton.

Captain Fairfax, like ourselves, was homeward bound, and before we parted at Plymouth, he invited us both to pass a few days with him at his own home on our way back, when we might cross the country to Holyhead, and return by Dublin and a different route,

which would be new to us all, to Cork. Having made this arrangement, I gave myself up to the joy which, in a heart not perverted, a return to one's home and birthplace must always inspire, after long wandering over sea and land, and among strangers.

My father was looking tolerably well, and in better spirits than, from Aunt Margery's letters, I had expected to find him. They were both overjoyed at seeing me, though the change in me was greater, I believe, at first sight, than in them, and, for several minutes, they hardly recognised me. Nothing that I could tell them interested my family more than the account I was able to give of Lady Honoria, and the life she had led at Dunleary; and I was forced to repeat her name so often, that I learned to utter it without the struggle its first mention cost me. For her sake, my father wished to be kind to her brother; but young Dunleary was either shy or proud, and preferred taking up his quarters alone at The Cedars. We did not see half so much of him as we wished during my short stay at Moraston.

Many half-effaced recollections of my boyhood were revived as I drove my father,—with feelings so changed, that I was more inclined to linger than to hurry past them,—through the quiet rural scenes into which his

daily practice carried him. Over the wild hills darkened by the purple heather, and past the fords at the bottom of the steep combs where the horse stopped to drink habitually,—along trackless downs and by stony lanes, so narrow, that if we, by rare accident, met another vehicle, one or the other must go back,—we journeyed pleasantly together. I learned more of his character than I had ever known before during these long rounds of duty. Though he generally,—as I remembered of old,—took his book with him, he now seldom opened it when I was his companion: the time was too precious to be spent in reading. Perhaps he foresaw dimly a period drawing near when active exertion, in which he had always delighted, would be forbidden him; for he seemed to take more pleasure than ever in the wild scenery round our home, and often pointed out to me minute but distinguishing peculiarities in its features. The ancient camps or castles crowning the heights had been objects of his attentive study, and he had read almost all the remarks of learned antiquarians on the subject. We now examined them together, and he listened while I told him observations I had made on the raths or fortified places,—sometimes planted with trees, sometimes bare as the fight might have left them,—on

the shores of Lough Neagh, and the strange relics, marked by tokens of human workmanship, found buried deep underneath the bogs.

He had never made up his quarrel with Matthew Brand, and The Knowle was one of the places I visited without him. Kate's mother looked more dejected than ever, while the old matron overwhelmed me with hospitality, and laughed and curtseyed with all her former good-humour, in the gladness of her heart at seeing me again. They both regretted Kate's absence, thinking that she would have liked to hear tidings of Lady Honoria, who was always kind to her. Her work, by which her mother said she was clever enough to maintain herself completely, lay on the table, as if she had only just gone out, but none of the family knew where she was to be found. She had lost her health and spirits, they complained, since she came back from Germany, and had got into a melancholy way of wandering about the moor, that made it useless to set the children to look for her. Often she went out alone early in the afternoon, and would not return for hours.

The poor girl was glad, no doubt, to get beyond the reach of her uncle's tongue. He was a greater savage than ever, and the tears coursed each other down his sister-in-law's

pale cheeks while she spoke of the wrath he had shown at the disgrace incurred, as he considered, by them all, through the Countess's sending back Kate to her family, without any reason being assigned for parting with her. He had had a great mind to go to Baden-Baden, himself, to find out the rights of the story ;—women were such simpletons ! he declared ;—and Kate, though she cried her eyes out about coming away, would not confess that she had done anything to anger my lady.

While the women were talking of her, the girl was seen coming through the gate of the small court in front of the house, and, presently, a loud voice, the precursor of Matthew's approach, was heard in the passage. He was evidently very much out of temper, and the mother trembled and turned pale, as the door opened slowly and Kate Brand entered the kitchen. At the first glance, I hardly knew her again, she was so greatly altered. If she had not grown taller, the increased slightness of her figure gave her the appearance of greater height. Her step was haughty, and the once bright cheeks of our blooming country-maiden were deadly pale ; but that might be from suppressed anger at her uncle's chiding. Pale as she was, Kate Brand was far more beautiful than ever, and her countenance was full of

strong indications of character. I scarcely knew whether I liked her appearance as well as when her form and face bore the more pleasing attributes of guileless youth and perfect health; but it was impossible not to admire her more.

She did not quicken her steps, nor make any answer to her savage old uncle's coarse reproaches about her staying from home so late; but came and spoke to me in a very quiet, ladylike, self-possessed manner. She had heard that I was in the neighbourhood, she said, and hoped that I might call at The Knowle. Then she inquired with grateful affection, as if mindful of their kindness, for my father and my Aunt Margery.

"That's just like them! I've no patience with women!" Matthew Brand growled out. "Just hear how she talks, as if the Doctor was the best friend she ever had; when the only time he ever passed this doorstep, since I came under these rotten old timbers, was to tempt her away; and much good leaving The Knowle has done her! Look here, Master Charles! She might have married well, and sailed in her own ship—that is, have had a good husband, such as a girl like her wants, to keep her out of squalls and eddies—but she chose to go adrift in a punt of her own, which, as might be expected, capsized when it got into deep water. As well put off in

one of the old dame's washing-tubs! This honest man would have her now, if she'd learn wisdom! but, what with her mother and mine, there's no end to her folly. They put her up to it; and once these young things get the tiller-rope in their own hands, there's no making them listen to a word of advice. Whether it's calm or foul, they set up the sail, and think they can weather it! And what's the end of their cruise? Why, they run the boat broadside on to the waves, which fill her, and flood her, and wash her up empty on the beach, where the bystanders jeer at her destruction!"

The pale cheeks of Kate flushed crimson as her uncle spoke; and the hands, which I noticed had become much whiter and softer-looking than in her girlhood, were clenched together, but she did not speak to him. Her mother's well-meant but injudicious intervention, as usual, blew the gale of Matthew's passion into a fierce tempest.

"Hold fast! If you speak another word, I'll make what I mean plainer. Here's a boat!—no, hang it, a girl I mean!—every day threatening to leave home; going to sea without making out her papers. I should like to know who's to trust her? Not I, for one, though she's too proud to speak, with her foreign ways and rustling silks;—the

lieutenant will say that I smuggled them ! There's no end of the trouble I'm at about you, and no one thanks me. Where did you find the money to trick her out, but in the old seaman's locker ? There's more, too, where that came from ; but I will know what is to be had for it before I spend it."

The old dame whispered to me that what Matthew said was true enough. He had money of his own, and could be generous with it, too, when the young folks didn't cross him. It was a pity he let his temper get the better of him, and that Kate took what he said so much to heart ; for her part, she never heeded him.

No doubt she was right, but it needed the callousness of age, added to the hardening effect on mind and body of a long life spent in rural toil, to make a woman bear Matthew's stinging comments patiently. Kate Brand was of a different temper. Her beautiful dark eyes flashed fire, and her small mouth worked with passion. At last, as if unable to bear more, and scorning to bandy abuse with the coarse-minded seaman, she gathered her work together from off the table, and with a slight adieu, conveyed in one brief word and speaking glance to me, she swept out of the large, low-roofed farm-kitchen, more with the air of a high-born lady than

of a girl brought up beneath those smoke-dried rafters.

The old man was silent for a moment after she was gone. I believe, in his heart, he was sorry to have vexed her; but when he looked at her mother, who was preparing to follow her with tears streaming down her cheeks, his wrath flamed out afresh.

“Let be! I won’t have one of you go after her!” he roared out. “Let her come down from her stilts, or, faith, I’ll bring her. What is she, to give herself airs and fling off in a huff, when her mother and grandmother, better women than she is, though they all have their faults, can bear to be told of them? How is a craft to right herself, if one and all, skipper and crew, turn to piping and comforting each other when the wind lashes the sea into a fury. Somebody must give orders; and you women, whether you like it or not, have got to obey. I won’t have one of you go near Miss Kate, till she lowers sail and asks my pardon.”

There was but little chance of this, I was certain; and most likely the choleric seaman was the first to forget the angry words he had scattered about almost at random. Much self-will and stern determination might be read on the proud forehead, and sullen, quivering mouth of the woman he had affronted; and

I doubt whether Kate forgave him, or came down again that evening. I did not wait to see, but, mounting my horse, rode homewards through the rugged valleys that lay between the lone hills and Lord St. Lo's park. During part of the way Duncan Geddes was my companion. He seemed to have grown more fanatical, and his exterior was much less prepossessing than formerly, so that I hardly wondered when I recollected the scornful curl of the lip with which the haughty girl at the farm had listened to her uncle's allusions to his constant affection for her. The Scotchman was certainly not the fine-looking fellow he used to be. Darker lines were drawn round his firmly-compressed lips, and the high cheek-bones and strongly-marked features had become much more prominent. He spoke sternly and sadly of the evil times on which he said we had fallen, and complained bitterly of the falling off from grace of some of his companions. His manner became almost fierce, when he found that I was returning from The Knowle, and he said, with emphasis, as he tramped along, in his mud-bespattered gaiters, beside me,—

“Saw you ever sic an alteration, Master Charles, as has come to that bonnie lassie? Sae lifted up with the evil pride that, I'm feared, gaes before a fall! She's awa' her

lane over the darkening hills, with none to guide her, and the temptations of a woman's vanity leading her astray ! ”

“ Her appearance is changed for the better, as far as personal beauty is concerned,” I said, “ and I pity her for the weary life she must lead at home. Her uncle's temper is more unbearable than ever.”

“ Nae doot he has mickle to try him,” answered the Scotchman, taking Matthew's part, to my surprise. “ I dinna think sae ill o' him since he told me fairly he was grieved at heart for the lassie's indiscretion. He's a rough-grained old block, but it's heart of oak within, I'm thinking ; and if the women told him truth, he'd treat them better. 'Tis their light conduct vexes him.”

He was not to be shaken in his opinion, and heaped text on text in a manner which I shall not imitate ; comparing the object of his fruitless love to the fair, frail daughters of Jerusalem, and others of Eve's faulty descendants. I did not continue very long in his company, but, leaping my horse over a paling, cantered along the road till I reached our door, grieved at heart for the young girl who had gone forth from her home almost at the same time as myself, and who had returned with a dark cloud upon her.

I had not mentioned before Matthew

Brand that Lord Dunleary was at 'The Cedars; and living at that place, far away among lonely hills, weeks might elapse before he would hear of it. The young nobleman was greatly occupied with the shooting, a pleasure in which I sometimes took part with him; though I am not sure that I enjoyed it as much as when, in my boyish arrogance, I walked with my gun over my shoulder, fancying myself "monarch of all I surveyed." The rightful heir of the property did not appear to take half as much pride in it as, in those days, I remembered swelling in my heart each time I looked at 'The Cedars. Their funereal gloom struck him more forcibly than their beauty, the first time I pointed them out to him. He was walking along in a moody, discontented humour, his gun on the full cock, and trailed carelessly in his hand, as usual, after his heedless manner, scarcely looking where he set his foot, though I often warned him of the probability of an accident.

"I tell you what, Frankland! if those noble trees are worth anything, my respectable parent will cut them down before this place comes to me. He can't sell it on account of its being settled upon Honor and me, or he would have done so long ago; and perhaps there's something prevents his felling

the timber. I'm too lazy to see into it ; but, young as I am, and strong, too, to look at, I fancy I'll not stand long in anybody's way : so what's the use of attaching one's self to people or places? The less one cares for anybody or anything the better!"

He sighed heavily, and, as he plodded on, with his eyes fixed on the ground, the want of youthful energy about him was more apparent than ever, and made me think it right to consult my father on the subject of his health. He questioned the young nobleman closely, but could discover no alarming symptoms, only an indolence and apathy which might proceed from the want of mental resources and from shyness, arising from a sense of inferiority to his equals in station, as well as from disease.

Whether it was that he resented our interference, I cannot tell ; but, though friendly in his manner to me, and respectful to my father, Lord Dunleary, after this, affected our society less than ever. We heard his gun oftener than his voice ; while it was said that his tastes were not elevated, and that he associated familiarly with his inferiors.

When I learned this, I determined to shorten my stay at Moraston ; and, in compliance with the engagement we had made,

we set off together to visit Captain Fairfax at his home in Staffordshire, where his mother resided with him at a place which had been long in the family, situated on the banks of the Trent.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE fertile river-scenery, shaded by trees still in full leaf, was grateful to the eye at the close of the hot summer which had parched the short turf of the western downs, while the first blasts of autumn had withered the scanty foliage on our bleak coast. Oakenshaw, the residence of our gallant young Captain, who had attained his present rank in the service at an unusually early age, was situated on high ground, with soft green meadows in front, over which, in rainy seasons, the water flowed ; and all the year their surface retained the emerald tint given by those frequent periods of moisture. It was fortunate for its inmates that the old house stood high and dry above the river, in the midst of woods with craggy knolls breaking through the trees, and the broad stream, in its silvery beauty, winding through the landscape.

Though the intervals of rest in a busy life have never afforded me time to visit it again, I see the place in its placid beauty

now. The grey manor-house, with its gables peeping forth from mantling shrubberies, and summer-flowers still in profusion,—old-fashioned, perhaps, but full of beauty and fragrance, filling the beds and bordering the walks of the garden. There were sunny terraces, and fountains, and vases, on which the light sparkled and glittered, with ancient fir-trees that shut out the sun's too fervid beams, and threw deep shadows on the velvet grass. Below, a grey stone bridge with many arches, dangerously long and narrow, but extremely picturesque, crossed the river and the low-lying, marshy meadows, which, at certain times, were flooded. There was also a view of a distant town, and an aged, hoary minster, almost covered with ivy, whence the chimes floated harmoniously over the water. On Sabbath-evenings, they seemed to me to come with peculiar clearness down the stream, calling us with their sweet, emphatic, solemn, and yet gladsome tones, to join in holy worship.

Captain Fairfax was the last of a long lineage—"the only child of his mother, who was a widow." There is a peculiar sacredness in that character, when women are severed by it in heart from the world; and Mrs. Fairfax, though she had a strong mind and a cheerful spirit, to enable her to bear up under afflic-

tion, was faithful to the memory of her dead husband. Though her grief was not by any means recent, it still lived in her heart. The late master of the house seemed to his wife more like one gone on a journey, whom she was waiting to rejoin, than as if absolutely taken from her. Evening after evening, as she sat at work, for her hands were never idle, her eyes would turn with a longing, lingering, look to the ancient bridge, across which he was in the habit of returning, when at home from sea,—for he, too, was a sailor,—punctual as clockwork, to the accustomed hour and minute.

Mrs. Fairfax had not, as some mourners do, put away the relics that reminded her of the departed one, in some old deserted lumber-room. She used the stout, gold-headed cane on which her husband, who was slightly lame, supported himself during the last years of his life, every time she walked out, and particularly when she went to church, though I could not see that she in the least required it. His picture,—that of a handsome, middle-aged man, full of spirit, energy, and warm-heartedness, looked down upon her as she plied her needle; and she often glanced up at it in the course of the conversations which, while I was her son's guest, we often held together. I knew the Admiral's ways,—the

time when he liked to dine, the county meetings he attended, his objections to over-educating the lower classes, his quarrels with some of his neighbours,—with the Rector, in particular, about the Sunday-post,—he dearly loved to have his letters and newspapers regularly ;—the good he did, and the harm his active interference prevented,—as well from his wife's report, as if I had seen him at the head of the family.

She had, indeed, made very little alteration in the habits to which he had been accustomed ; and her son was too little at home to care to introduce—even if he would have preferred it—any other system. There was a Dower-house on the property, to which she meant to retire when he married—an event of which she lived in constant expectation. I never saw any one in such a perfect state of preparation for a change, and yet so comfortably established for the time being in her own house, as Mrs. Fairfax. From her handsomely-furnished, commodious, always well-ordered drawing-room, to her household economy and admirably-disposed store-room and domestic offices, over which she conducted me with some pride,—the future mistress of Oakenshaw, to whom she frequently referred, would have found all in readiness for her ; and, notwithstanding the pains these excellent arrange-

ments must have cost her, Mrs. Fairfax seemed ready to give up her position without a sigh.

“There is the same view from the Dower-house as that which I look at, every evening of my life, while I sit at this window. It would not be such a change as you think for me to leave Oakenshaw,” my hostess remarked, when, I believe, she became aware that her equanimity surprised me. “You see, Mr. Frankland, I am far from being a young woman; and Lionel ought to have a younger and a more lively companion,—such a wife, in fact, as I hope I made to his father, forty years ago, with due allowance for changes of fashion and taste in such matters. I often wonder why he does not marry. There is nothing gives so much happiness in this life as a well-assorted union, such as mine was with the Admiral; and, though so many years have passed, and he had his quick ways and starts of temper, I still sit here, watching and fidgeting myself as I used to do, about his careless way of driving over that old bridge,—almost forgetting, for the moment, that I shall never see him come past the grey arches again.”

She paused and dropped her work, while she looked with eyes that, I am sure, though she turned them away from me, were too much

blinded to pursue it, down the course of the stream.

“I never repented of the vow I made, to love, honour, and obey him; and no woman will have cause to rue the hour when she plights her faith to Lionel, any more than I had to regret giving my whole heart to his father. They are alike in many points of character, though it might not strike a stranger. Long habits of command gave the Admiral a dictatorial way, which, as yet, I do not see in Lionel; but he has the same firm will and kindly nature, and the timid soul which trusts itself to him will not be deceived in its reliance. I wish you would tell me what you think it can be that makes Lionel so averse to speaking of his marriage? He cannot mean to let this old place, which has been in his family for centuries, go away, as it must do, if he has no heirs, quite into another branch. That is a change which it pains me much more to contemplate than to fancy my grandchildren running about on the lawn, or coming down to pay their daily visit to me at the Dower-house, half a mile distant. Do tell me if there was any attachment between my son and Lord St. Lo's daughter? She is almost the only young lady he ever mentioned in his letters to me; and I was surprised at the rather close inquiries he made about her.

"That is a match which would give me the very greatest satisfaction."

I was somewhat embarrassed how to answer her. At last, I said that I had had fewer opportunities than she might fancy, from what Captain Fairfax had told her of my acquaintance with Lord St. Lo's family, of making any observations on the subject which naturally interested her so much. The difference in our relative position, when we were on board ship, was much greater than the kindness of Captain Fairfax and herself would allow to appear between us, now that I was their guest.

"Oh ! I have not been a naval officer's wife for so long without hearing enough of discipline and etiquette," she answered : " but then Lionel respects your superior information ; and he told me that Lord St. Lo was under very important obligations to your father. I knew his lordship well in his youth," she said, a faint colour stealing into her still good-looking, pleasant face, " and he was a most attractive person — very handsome, but not so steady as he should have been. My parents were right when they told me he would not make a good husband, and I never repented having followed their advice. His daughter, if she is like him in person, ought to be a fine creature, and she had a mother who was all excellence and ami-

ability. I should not say a word in the young lady's favour, otherwise ; for I have a rooted opinion that girls take after their mothers, and I should not like my son to marry any one whose own parent had set her a bad example."

Captain Fairfax's entrance, at this moment, prevented his mother's continuing these inquiries, and though she tried to make him speak of our mutual friends in Ireland, he dexterously avoided the subject. His plans appeared to be as fixed as his mother's were transitory ; and nothing annoyed him more than any allusion to the prospect of her removal. He would pull down the Dower-house, he said, or let it—more than one person had been tempted by the beautiful view down the river to wish to become its inhabitant—if she threatened to leave him.

At present, there seemed, certainly, little chance of his settling at home. His hopes and ideas appeared centred in his profession, and a brief holiday at Oakenshaw, in the intervals of duty, was all the recreation he was disposed to allow himself. I never saw such a contrast as existed between him and young Dunleary, who idled about the woods from morning till evening, without end or aim in existence, apparently ; while life seemed too short for realising the Captain's prospects of future distinction.

He was an ardent politician, and felt convinced that ere long the nations of Europe would be plunged in a great war, wherein he desired to obtain opportunities of rendering his ancient and honourable name still more illustrious. This earnest attachment to his profession ran sorely counter to his mother's wishes ; and I believe she was right in thinking that the strong objection he expressed to fettering himself by domestic ties had been strengthened by some recent disappointment. At all events, he turned away impatiently from her suggestions ; and there seemed little occasion for her to keep her affections so sedulously detached from a home where he evidently regarded her as permanently settled.

His manner as a host was very courteous and agreeable, and I was sorry when the few days during which our visit lasted were over.

Mrs. Fairfax had known my mother's family, intimately, in her younger days, when she mingled much in society ; and she treated me with great kindness. There was a strong tinge of romance in her disposition, which years and cares had not eradicated ; and she remembered having sympathised warmly with her friend throughout the trials which had to be surmounted, before the Dean's widow consented to her daughter's marriage with my father. What I told her of the happiness

which, I am certain, my mother experienced during her married life, interested her, and she felt deeply for the faithful sorrow with which my father had borne her loss.

When I saw her gazing proudly on her son's beautiful domain, skirted by the river and overshadowed by lofty trees—one of those stately homes of which England has so much reason to be proud—I could not help thinking that Lady Honoria, tamed by affection, such as she was capable of feeling, and Fairfax was in every respect calculated to inspire, would have been such a daughter-in-law as Mrs. Fairfax ardently desired to welcome. A happy life might even yet await the romantic Irish girl, in that peaceful home on the banks of the gliding river, with fair children at her knee, and affluence everywhere surrounding her. When the long shadows fell, and darkened the sunny glades and sparkling waters, and the grey gables of the house, together with the arches of the old bridge, grew indistinct, I sometimes imagined her tall, slight form in that ancient family mansion, and wondered whether the same idea was in the thoughts of the owner of Oakenshaw, while, in the grave moods that excited his mother's uneasiness, he looked from the broad terrace which he paced, hour after hour, with a sailor's even step, from end to end.

It was not in my power to read his heart—I do not think any human being possessed his confidence—but undoubtedly his mother was right in believing, as she did, that, at the present moment, Captain Fairfax was not happy. I saw her watch him, as he would stop his quarter-deck walk, and survey the fair prospect with eyes that scarcely saw one object it presented to him; and the mother's heart echoed the sigh of dissatisfaction that showed his thoughts were far away. He hated idleness, and was therefore thoroughly glad when the time arrived for him once more to resume the duties of active service, though he felt the separation from his mother severely. He brightened up when the parting was fairly over; and our journey across England was a pleasant one, in fine September weather, showing us some of the fairest parts of the midland counties, and ending in enchanting, though rapid, glimpses of the Welsh mountains, with bright cascades dashing down their rugged sides; woods, lakes, and rivers, glancing past us, as we travelled along roads which, with the desert bogs and loughs of Ireland full in our recollection, seemed conducted through a garden.

A few hours carried us across the Channel, and a day was forced to suffice for the beautiful Irish capital, where grace and beauty

stand close to desolation and haggard poverty in its most unseemly aspect. Then, by day and night, we journeyed on, till we found ourselves once more on board the Retribution, which only waited for her Captain to quit the shores of the British Isles. We dropped down the harbour of Cork in the night, and when the next morning's sun rose we had taken leave of our native land, and were passing down the Channel, with favouring breezes, on our way to Lisbon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I AM sure it was with a sad heart that Captain Fairfax, on our homeward voyage, six months afterwards, altered the course of the ship, on his own responsibility, and steered for the Irish coast. This was not the manner wherein he had ever purposed revisiting Dunleary; nor could he now promise himself the glad welcome from Lady Honoria which, in his more sanguine moods, he perhaps might hope one day to receive from her,—for on board the *Retribution* was the lifeless body of the poor young Lord, her brother.

It seemed as if a disastrous doom hung over the gallant boys with whom she had sported in childhood, and that the sea was destined to be their destruction. Though prosperous in all other respects, our cruise had ended fatally for Dunleary. He was a wilful youth, heedless of advice, ignorant and unmindful of the effect of change of climate, and constantly transgressing rules which his by no means strong health made it imperatively necessary for him to obey. Independ-

ently of this, all the officers, as well as myself, thought that some hidden cause for grief preyed upon his spirits. He had not his father's careless temper, but, to put aside unwelcome reflections, he often drank deeply. Then, under the burning mid-day sun of the Peninsula, he would ride wildly away and return at night with the heavy dews hanging about his clothes, exhausted and weak as a child. He was very impatient of control, and complained that the monotonous routine on board ship wearied him. The irritation of increasing ill health was upon him, and neither afloat nor ashore did he appear to find rest. While our vessel lay at anchor at the mouth of the Tagus he left us, and for a short time his energies seemed to revive, for he came back from a tour as far as the frontiers of Spain with his face bronzed by the sun, and his frame invigorated. This improvement, however, did not last long, and I perceived that Captain Fairfax, who visited him frequently at the villa where he was lodging, with a Portuguese family, was very uneasy about him. The season was an unhealthy one, and every day the friend to whose charge he had been committed felt the responsibility to be more serious. I believe he was more in Dunleary's confidence than any of us. My own duties on board ship at this time were heavy, and the young man

seemed to avoid our society. At last sailing orders were received. Our Captain was peremptory, and reclaimed his refractory guest, who complied with the summons reluctantly. In spite of the change for the worse in his appearance, the young nobleman declared he had never in his whole life been so happy as during his stay at Cintra. He meant to give up to his father and mother-in-law every advantage hitherto in dispute, and get a moderate settlement, which would afford him an income to live upon, in lieu of the prospect of succeeding to estates mortgaged nearly up to their value. When this was done he should be his own master ; and Honor, if she liked, could return with him to Lisbon. He was just in the humour to barter his inheritance with the same carelessness that a child shows in parting with a plaything.

The delay caused by baffling winds was very trying to both his health and spirits. Once on board, he seemed only anxious to have the voyage over, and to settle affairs with the Earl in such a manner as might make him his own master and a free man. A decline, however, more rapid than I could have anticipated, was wasting his strength, and soon such dangerous symptoms appeared that I entertained little hope of his reaching his home alive. From first to last our Captain

never left him. He had no mother, and not even his sister could have been more tender; yet in sickness as in health our care and friendship were unavailing. I heard Captain Fairfax ask, in the accent of a brother, when danger was first apprehended, whether any debts or difficulties troubled him; but Dunleary was in a sullen mood, and would not answer.

He manifested great impatience before his death to see his father, but his hours were numbered, and the favouring winds which at last filled our sails and smoothed our passage did not waft us over the seas as quickly as the dark wing of the death-angel swept over the bed of the sick youth. Perhaps, if he had known how nearly his end was approaching, he would have confided either to Fairfax or myself the load which weighed on his spirits, and impeded the effect of every remedy art could prescribe for his malady; but his mind wandered so much at times that it was impossible to understand his incoherent ejaculations; and, at the last, though he became more tranquil, and often spoke of his sister, and the happy days of their childhood, a veil seemed to rest over the few years of his manhood, and whatever darkened or troubled his memory before this temporary respite was quite obliterated. He died in our Captain's

arms peacefully ; and instead of his remains being committed to the deep, our course, as I have said, was changed, and with signs of mourning, her colours half-mast high, and guns firing slowly, the Retribution cast anchor once more under the white cliffs of Antrim.

In spite of the fits of morbid gloom which latterly overshadowed the brighter features of his character, Dunleary had made himself beloved on board our vessel, and by his father's tenantry he was now universally lamented. Even the townsmen, though they bore little love to the Earl, showed every mark of respect to the corpse of his heir, when it was known to be on board the ship. Lord St. Lo seemed broken down with sorrow after hearing of his loss, and his handsome Countess manifested every decent sign of outward affliction. A very long train of mourners received the poor young man's body when it was landed on the beach, and together with all of our officers and crew who could be spared from duty, followed it to the family vault where Dunleary's Irish ancestors lay buried.

I had imagined that Lord St. Lo might wish his son to be interred beside his mother at Moraston, near the inheritance of the children of his first marriage—'The Cedars ; but I believe his affairs were in such a state of embarrassment that he shrank from incurring this

expense. No one interfered with the arrangements he chose to make; nor was the solemn pomp of the funeral ceremony disturbed by Lady Honoria's impetuous grief, as I half feared it might be. I looked in vain for her among the mourners, though several female forms were visible. Their sable hoods and crape veils were too artistically arranged, and their postures of grief too studied for me to admit for an instant the idea that Dunleary's sister was one of them. In all probability she was too ill, I considered, to be able to attend the funeral of the object of so much love and regret as her last-surviving brother.

Captain Fairfax asked me to ride with him to Dunleary Castle on his first visit of inquiry after the family. On our way, he talked to me for some time of his regret at having fulfilled so unsatisfactorily the mission he had undertaken. I thought he appeared gratified when I spoke of his unwearied kindness and care, and said that I should bear testimony to those most interested in the ill-fated young nobleman respecting his affectionate solicitude. He thanked me, and said, briefly,—

“They will believe you, Frankland, sooner than any man living. I shall be glad to have such a record given to Dunleary's friends of the manner in which I tried to perform the trust committed to me.”

He said no more, but I saw, as we rode along the beach,—from which the tide had receded, so that we were not forced to make use of the bridge,—his eyes turn to the projecting balcony whence, the previous summer, I had watched the mysterious signal-lights at the mouth of the cave. There was no figure at the window now, and the ribbed sand under the beetling rocks retained the marks of the last high waves, but not a single footprint.

Lady St. Lo received us in the great drawing-room, where she was sitting, with her own fair-haired children around her. No one else was present, and I saw Fairfax's eyes more than once fixed upon the door, and then an expression of bitter disappointment rise to his face, as if, like myself, he had supposed that, whatever Lady Honoria's grief might be, she would not rest satisfied without seeing us, and hearing the details of her brother's last illness. It was impossible to dwell upon these with his step-mother. The children, most of them too young to understand how to feign grief, laughed and interrupted our attempts at conversation; and even their mother's decorous gravity was not sufficiently indicative of real feeling to induce us to communicate more than was necessary of the painful circumstances of the case.

At last, just as I was on the point of making the same inquiry, Captain Fairfax pro-

nounced Lady Honoria's name. He had a message to deliver to her, if she were well enough to hear it, which it might hereafter be a comfort to her to have received from her brother.

Lady St. Lo coloured and hesitated. She greatly feared that her daughter-in-law was not at present in a state to bear any additional agitation. It was necessary to exercise great caution in dealing with a person of Lady Honoria's sensitive and excitable feelings. In the Earl's absence, especially,—he was from home, that morning, for the first time since hearing of his son's death,—she could not venture to introduce any except members of the family into his daughter's presence.

Her manner was mysterious, and seemed designedly to convey more meaning than her words. Fairfax, I could see, was struck by it, and showed an increased desire to obtain an interview with Lady Honoria, but the Countess was immovable. She could not say more without her husband's sanction; but certainly, on her own responsibility, it was impossible for her to accede to our request. The movements of Lord St. Lo's daughter, however, were quite unfettered,—far too little controlled, she added, with strong emphasis; and she had no doubt other opportunities would be afforded us, if, on reflection and further inquiry, we considered it expedient to ac-

quaint Lady Honoria with her brother's last words and wishes.

I thought that Lady St. Lo's beautiful features were completely disfigured as she spoke. Her forehead, which was naturally low but very smooth, was contracted, and a deep furrow crossed its white surface. Her eyes flashed and sparkled, and a discordant laugh among the children, who were now at play, jarred upon our nerves. Captain Fairfax haughtily rose.

"I must, then, madam, seek some other means of fulfilling my poor young friend's last request and expectation, since it is too sacred a trust to be neglected. His sister's name was the last sound I heard from his lips."

"I am glad to hear it," said Lady St. Lo, with another strange look, and a yet more disagreeable emphasis. "It might have been quite otherwise! These young people have been a great—a very painful charge to me and to their father. I trust my children may be more dutiful."

She looked at the noisy, healthy group with eyes full of strong affection, but it was not the kind of love that interested me. Beautiful as the mother and her offspring undoubtedly were, there was something too material about them to please me, and I was glad to put a speedy end to our visit.

We crossed the sands in silence, but Fair-

fax's indignation could no longer be restrained. "I do not know what that abominable woman meant, Frankland, by some of her insinuations," he said; "but I will see Lady Honoria, to deliver her brother's last message, in spite of her mother-in-law's manœuvres. Why was she not present to-day? She used not to be so docile. I do not believe that she is at the Castle at all; but I will understand this mystery before the week is out."

The ice once broken, we talked freely, and indulged in various conjectures, but we could arrive at no satisfactory issue. The Earl, when we next saw him, was almost equally unintelligible. He stammered and hesitated when his daughter's name was mentioned; and on Fairfax's gravely requesting to see her, for the purpose he had stated to Lady St. Lo, her father, with a burst of almost childish emotion, entreated him not to attempt it.

Lady Honoria, he said, when he had a little recovered from his agitation, was not at present at Dunleary. She, the last of his children by his first marriage, had left him for a time. Her health was extremely delicate. It was impossible to say how she would bear the tidings of her brother's death, which had yet to be conveyed to her. It might cause him to lose her also. As a father, and now a most

deeply-afflicted parent, he could only agree with Lady St. Lo, that too much caution could hardly be used in dealing with his daughter.

The old man would not say more, and we left him in his half-imbecile grief, with feelings, on our part, bordering on disgust. We could neither of us bear to permit Lady Honoria to hear the intelligence of her brother's death, in such a manner as might please her step-mother,—a woman devoted to her own children, and always disposed to treat those of the first marriage cruelly. I remembered Lady Honoria's saying as a child, but with a woman's bitterness, that she and her brothers were stumbling-blocks in the path of her father's second wife. The more I thought upon it, the more I dreaded the malice which had now but one frail object left.

Fairfax, I am sure, was as wretched as myself; but all our inquiries gained for us little information. Lady Honoria, it was known, had left Dunleary, but the motive for her departure and her present mode of life were wrapped in uncertainty. One person told us, she was gone down the coast for "say-bathing." Another declared she was right-down "kilt" with melancholy and my lady's airs, and never seemed like herself at the Castle. It was quite another way of life that

suited her; and, if it was to The Fishery she was gone, sure she would have a taste of liberty.

It might be fancy, but, sometimes, in the answers we received, evasive or negative as they were, I read some resemblance to the Countess's bitter tone of meaning.

END OF VOL. I.

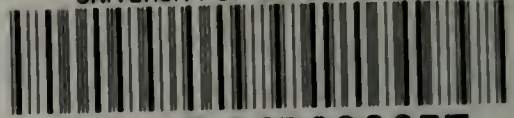
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